



**HOW THE CIVIL WAR WAS WON**

The real reason Cromwell's forces triumphed



# HISTORY

MAGAZINE

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## THE BIG QUESTIONS OF THE **Black Death**

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Where did it originate?  
Why was it so lethal?



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“During the past two years, as Covid-19 has dominated our lives, renewed attention has been paid to pandemics of the past, and in particular the **Black Death**. In this month’s cover feature, historian Monica H Green draws on the latest scientific research to seek to explain when and how the disease originated and what enabled the plague to spread so far, with such devastating effects. That’s on page 55, and do also check out our new Black Death podcast series, which is currently being released weekly on *historyextra.com* and all the leading podcast platforms.

Another major news story of the 2020s has been the Taliban takeover of **Afghanistan** following the withdrawal of US troops last year. It’s only the latest chapter in a series of conflicts in the region that stretch back many decades and involve multiple forces and international players. In this issue we’re revisiting a pivotal episode in these wars: the 1979 Soviet invasion of the country. Though it’s often viewed through the prism of the Cold War, Elisabeth Leake argues that we need to consider how this conflict fits into broader strands of Afghan history. You’ll find her account on page 36.

It’s not all doom and gloom this month, though. With the **Queen’s platinum jubilee** celebrations nearly upon us, we asked Tracy Borman to head back into royal history and describe how previous British monarchs have celebrated their major milestones. Turn to page 50 to find out how to party like it’s 1897.

### Rob Attar

Editor



## THREE THINGS I’VE LEARNED THIS MONTH

### 1. Linear B on Radio 3

One fascinating fact from David Hendy’s BBC series is that the discovery of how to translate the ancient Minoan script known as Linear B was first announced live on the Third Programme in 1952 (page 47).

### 2. An unlikely assassin

There have been many royal assassination attempts over the centuries, but the story of Margaret Nicholson, who planned to murder George III with a dessert knife, was definitely new to me (page 32).

### 3. Top of the class

I expect few schoolboys can claim an achievement as impressive as Robert G Heft, who came up with the design for the current flag of the USA as part of a school project. It was officially introduced in 1960 (page 35).



## THIS ISSUE’S CONTRIBUTORS



### Helen Hackett

“I’ve found that exploring Elizabethan ideas about the mind sheds light on the extraordinary literature of the period, and on still unresolved questions about the mind and the self.”

**Helen untangles the Elizabethans’ complex relationship with their mental wellbeing on page 60**



### Jessie Childs

“I’ve always been fascinated by sieges. They offer dangerous vistas, incongruous meetings and, most dauntingly, an unflinching look at the human condition. The siege of Basing House threw up some extraordinary characters.”

**Jessie charts the savage siege that helped win the Civil War on page 20**



### Monica H Green

“I think people haven’t been as interested in the Black Death as perhaps they should have been. If they had been, I think we might be in a better situation right now.”

**Monica explains how scientific discoveries are transforming our understanding of the plague on page 55**



### Ronald Hutton

“I spotted a problem with our attitude to the question of pagan survival in the Middle Ages: there were a number of rather goddess-like figures in medieval culture, who didn’t seem, to me, to be surviving from the pagan ancient world.”

**Ronald discusses four deities who straddled the Christian and pagan worlds on page 72**

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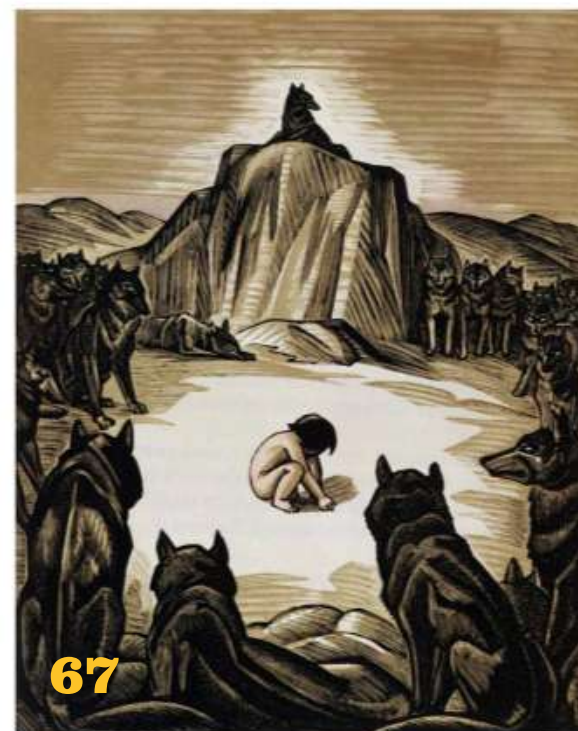
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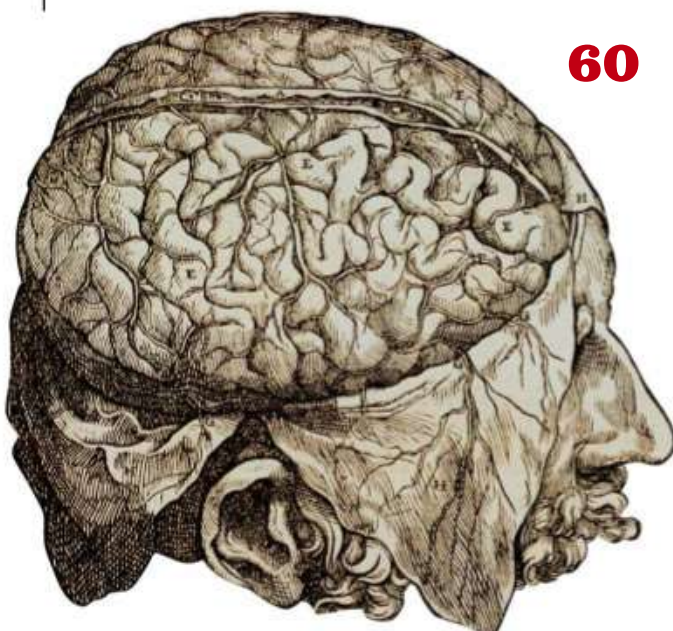


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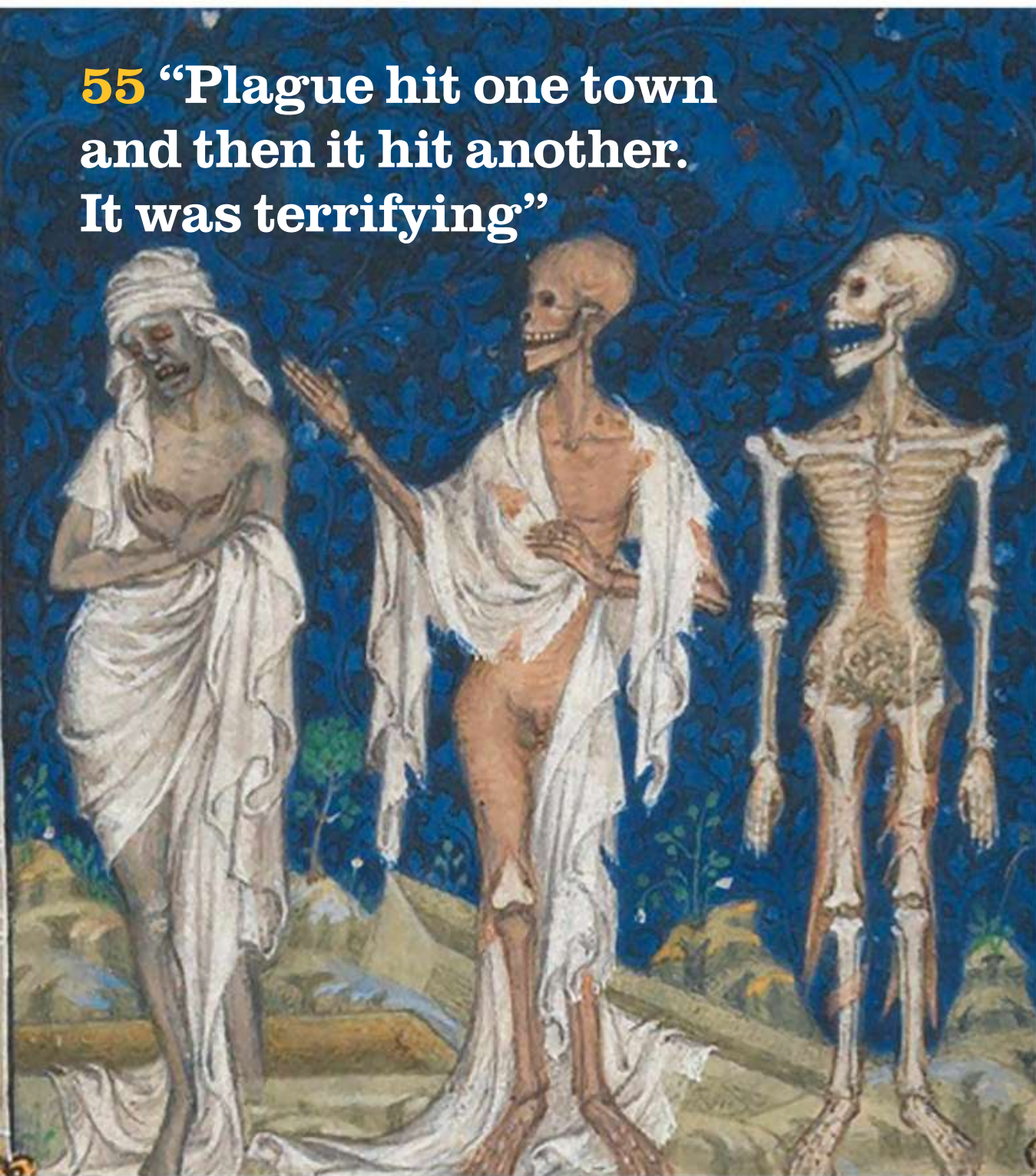


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## EYE-OPENER

### Metal detective

It's a striking sight: a four-legged, high-tech robot patrolling the streets of the ancient city of Pompeii. The machine – nicknamed Spot, because of its dog-like appearance – is able to identify cracks, erosion and other signs of damage at the archaeological site.

The ruins of the city, which was famously buried beneath volcanic ash after Vesuvius erupted in AD 79, have repeatedly been targeted by thieves, and the robot can also search for tunnels dug during attempts to steal historical artefacts. Weighing just 25kg and with 360-degree vision, "Spot" can be controlled remotely or programmed to follow set routes.

The robot, created by American engineering firm Boston Dynamics, is not the only innovation being trialled in a bid to preserve the Unesco World Heritage Site. Its custodians have also deployed a flying laser scanner that can create 3D images of the city from the air.

# TALKING POINTS

## A noble tradition?



Headlines about the ways in which the UK aids refugees prompted Twitter users to consider the nation's historical attitudes towards the issue. **ANNA WHITELOCK** took stock of the debate

Following recent news stories about British policies towards refugees and asylum seekers, Twitter users reflected on the history of Britain's relationship with those in need. Journalist **Jonathan Freedland** (@Freedland) kicked off the debate, noting that "People keep saying that Britain has a 'noble tradition' of taking in refugees, citing the [pre-Second World War] Kindertransport as proof... But here's the problem... To quote the late, much-missed [historian] David Cesarani, Britain 'was prepared to allow refuge for children, but not for adults who might enter the labour market'."

Understandably, Freedland's comments prompted much discussion. **Alex Sufit** (@AlexSufit) noted that "many of the adults who made it to our shores, Jews and others escaping persecution, were interned as 'enemy aliens' – alongside Nazis and Nazi sympathisers. Some were shipped as far as Australia to [internment] camps. Britain has, at best, a chequered past in this regard."

**Julia Kirchhausen** (@jkhausen), meanwhile, offered a personal perspective: "That may be true, but my father was one of the *Kinder* Britain took in [during the war] and he was forever grateful. Maybe people did what they could in the fringes to try to help in whatever way they could. Is that so wrong?"

Yet **Denise Fluskey** (@DeniseFluskey) offered another story with a very different

message: "Both my parents survived the Holocaust, [so] I know the after-effects of trauma that ripple through the whole family. The Kindertransport saved lives, but also gave death sentences to the parents and bequeathed traumatic survivor guilt to those children."

Some commentators were eager to point out that other examples were perhaps more illustrative. **David Robinson** (@scotsman-david) argued that "a better one is the quarter of a million Belgians [whom Britain took in as refugees from] 1914". The author and British Army major **Levison Wood** (@Levison-wood) looked even further back, pointing to the "50,000 Huguenots [who] settled in Britain after persecution in France [from the 16th century]. It's a fairly noble tradition."

Finally, **Jeff Kaye** (@Jakdaw09) aimed to find some common ground. "[It's] important we do not get carried away with the nonsensical notion that Britain has always welcomed refugees," he suggested. "The immigration pendulum here has always moved in wide arcs. The Aliens Act of 1905 [which implemented some of the UK's first controls on immigration] is another example. [The UK has] two traditions on refugees – one noble, one not so much." ■

Anna Whitelock is professor of history at City, University of London



Child refugees arrive in England in 1938 as part of the Kindertransport

**// The immigration pendulum here in the United Kingdom has always moved in wide arcs //**

Join the debate at [twitter.com/historyextra](https://twitter.com/historyextra)

Darwin's "tree of life" sketch in one of two recently returned notebooks, which had been missing for more than 20 years

## SCIENCE

### Darwin notebooks returned to library

Two decades after they disappeared from Cambridge University Library, a pair of notebooks compiled by Charles Darwin have been returned – deposited anonymously in a pink gift bag in a section of the building with no CCTV coverage.

The leather-bound manuscripts, which date from the 1830s and contain a sketch of the "tree of life" that is thought to mark a key point in the scientist's development of his theory of evolution by natural selection, were last seen in November 2000. They went missing following an internal request to remove them from storage to be photographed, though their absence wasn't noted until two months later. Despite a series of searches they were not found; finally, in 2020, university librarian Dr Jessica Gardner reported them as stolen and launched a worldwide appeal for their return.

Their reappearance outside a fourth-floor office in early March, in their original blue box and with a note reading "Librarian, Happy Easter", prompted relief from staff, particularly as they bear no signs of damage or significant handling. The notebooks are now set to go on display from 9 July, part of a free exhibition at the library.

"My sense of relief at the notebooks' safe return is profound and almost impossible to adequately express," Gardner said. "Along with so many others all across the world, I was heartbroken to learn of their loss and my joy at their return is immense... The notebooks can now retake their rightful place alongside the rest of the Darwin Archive at Cambridge, at the heart of the nation's cultural and scientific heritage." ■

# HISTORY IN THE NEWS

A selection of the stories hitting the **history headlines**

## Dutch publisher recalls Anne Frank betrayal book ▼

A book claiming to have identified the person who betrayed Anne Frank to the Nazis in 1944 has been withdrawn from sale by its Dutch publisher after being extensively criticised by historians. In *The Betrayal of Anne Frank*, Rosemary Sullivan suggests that Arnold van den Bergh, a member of the Jewish Council, revealed the location of the Frank family in a bid to secure the safety of his own relatives. Doubts about evidence, and a critical report published by leading Dutch experts in March, led publisher Ambo Anthos to recall the book from shops.



A Dutch publisher is withdrawing copies of a book that claims to identify the man who betrayed Anne Frank's family



The Willandra Lakes Region World Heritage Site, where the remains of Mungo Man (inset) will be buried

## ▲ Ancient Aboriginal remains to be reburied in Australia

The ancient remains of more than 100 Aboriginal people are set to be reburied in outback Australia following a ruling by the country's government.

Among the remains are those of two individuals known as Mungo Lady and Mungo Man, found in 1968 and 1974 respectively and thought to date from around 42,000 years ago. They take their names from Lake Mungo which, along with the surrounding Willandra Lakes World Heritage region in south-east Australia, was the location of a string of such finds from

the 1960s to the 1980s. Many remains were removed without the permission of the land's traditional Aboriginal inhabitants, though those of Mungo Lady and Mungo Man were returned in 1992 and 2017.

Despite government assurances that the decision to rebury the remains in the area respects the wishes of its Indigenous communities, representatives of some of those groups – including the Barkindji nation, one of the region's prominent peoples – argue that they were not properly consulted during the process.

## ► Major UK history book prize announces 2022 shortlist

Works looking at people accused of witchcraft in 17th-century North America, the development of the idea of God in the western world, and the value of historical statues in the 21st century are among the books in contention for a major history award.

The shortlist for the Wolfson History Prize, which marks its 50th anniversary this year, was unveiled in April. Along with Malcolm Gaskill's *The Ruin of All Witches: Life and Death in the New World*, Francesca Stavrakopoulou's *God: An Anatomy* and Alex von Tunzelmann's *Fallen Idols: Twelve Statues that Made History*, nominated titles include *The Ottomans* by Marc David Baer, *Going to Church in Medieval England* by Nicholas Orme and *Devil-Land: England Under Siege, 1588–1688* by Clare Jackson.

The winner of the £50,000 award from the Wolfson Foundation will be announced in June. Chair of the judges, historian David Cannadine, said: "This year's shortlist once again showcases the diversity and vigour



Francesca Stavrakopoulou's *God: An Anatomy* is among the books shortlisted for the Wolfson History Prize

of history writing in the UK. The judges were impressed by the variety, originality and quality of research demonstrated by the six shortlisted books."

## British pop culture archive opens in Manchester ▼

A major new collection celebrating postwar popular culture in Britain is opening in Manchester. The British Pop Archive, based at the John Rylands Library, will preserve an array of objects from the 1950s onwards, drawn from the worlds of television, music and film.

Although the collection will cover the whole of the UK, its inaugural exhibition – open from 19 May – will focus on its host city, charting the history of *Coronation Street* production company Granada as well as telling the stories of internationally renowned bands including Joy Division, New Order and The Smiths (whose frontman, Morrissey, is pictured right in 1984). For more details about the exhibition and the new archive, see [www.library.manchester.ac.uk/rylands](http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/rylands). 





## MICHAEL WOOD ON...

### THE RISE AND FALL OF THE FIRST CITIES IN THE WORLD

# // We lament the loss of all the good things that come with city life //

Watching with horror the destruction of Mariupol in Ukraine – the obliteration of a city of more than 400,000 people – my mind went to other cities, other

times. More than 30 years ago, in the aftermath of the war with Iran, I went to southern Iraq, the heartland of ancient Sumer, and the sites of Nippur, Eridu and Uruk – the first true cities on Earth.

Today the ruins of Uruk lie out in a windswept desert. Walking its six-mile circuit leaves an unforgettable feeling of the transience of human achievement. The site is 100-feet deep in debris; one's feet crunch Ubaid pottery and Sasanian glass, the detritus of more than 5,000 years of city life. The birthplace of writing, science and literature – the *Epic of Gilgamesh* was written here – the city died at the time of the Arab conquest in the seventh century, dried up by climate change. It is home now only to Bedouin nomads. Nippur, the sacred city of Sumer, survived longer, to the 13th century AD. A Christian bishopric, a Jewish school and a famous Sufi scholar are all testimony to its vibrant religious life.

These cities were packed with treasure, art, rich fabrics and exotic merchandise. But Iraq was a flat plain with no natural borders. Its cities were always targets for outsiders, and were destroyed time and again. As a result, a uniquely powerful genre of literature grew up: congregational laments for the destruction of cities. These began around 2,000 BC and lasted through the whole of the ancient

world, sung to music whenever a temple was restored and rededicated after the destroyed city was rebuilt.

Composed soon after the events they describe, some are great works of literature. Babylonian laments inspired the biblical Book of Lamentations, just as the *Epic of Gilgamesh* lies behind the Book of Genesis. Written in Sumerian, they have superb poetic quality: "To overturn the time ... the storms gather to strike like a flood: to destroy the city, to destroy the temple..."

These laments came back to me with the dreadful news of the Russian sack of Ukrainian cities. We humans have lived in cities for only five millennia or so, a short time in our story. Their destructions are among the most terrible stories told by humankind: the *Iliad* with the killing of the men and rape and enslavement of the women of Troy; *The Broken Spears*, the Aztec lament for the destruction of their capital, Tenochtitlan. In China the sack of Kaifeng in 1127 was the subject of poetry, memoirs and even a great painting showing the lost pleasures of the city's streets. In his nostalgic book *Dream of Splendour*, Meng Yuanlao describes Kaifeng's vibrant restaurant culture, the street entertainers, and the friendliness of the citizens, "always ready to help neighbours with kind words and a cup of tea".

And that's the point. We lament the loss of life, but also all the good things that come with cities, built up over so long and yet smashed overnight by men of war. The barbaric actions of the Russian president Putin are echoed throughout history. As the Roman philosopher Seneca said: "Ask me for an image of civilisation and I'll show you the sack of a great city."

In his book *The Better Angels of our Nature* the cognitive psychologist Steven Pinker recently argued that human destructiveness is on the wane as we become more rational and empathetic social beings. I'm not so sure: after all, it's in the last four generations that we have seen the most devastating wars in history. Pinker's argument for me is based more on faith than science. Historians, I think, would say that large-scale organised violence has been with us since the first states in Mesopotamia 5,000 years ago – and in 2022, in Yemen, Myanmar, Ethiopia and Ukraine, it still does its worst.

Watching the catastrophe unfolding in Ukraine, I remember a myth told by the ancient Sumerians. As great myths do, it goes straight to the heart of the matter. Enki, the God of Wisdom, makes a gift to Inanna, Goddess of Uruk, which she will pass on to humankind. The gift is all the attributes of civilisation itself, the things we love about life in cities: the arts of the scribe, the smith, the carpenter and the copper worker, even "the art of being kind". But he also gives war, violence, the destruction of cities, fear and lamentation. "You must take them all," Enlil adds. "And once you have taken them, there can be no dispute: you cannot give them back." ■

#### Michael Wood

is professor of public history at the University of Manchester. He has presented numerous BBC series, and his latest book is *The Story of China* (Simon & Schuster, 2021). His Twitter handle is @mayavision



ILLUSTRATION BY FEMKE DE JONG

# AFGHAN CRISIS APPEAL



**'Please don't let the people of Afghanistan be forgotten'**



**REBECCA FERGUSON,**  
MSF NURSE,  
EMERGENCY ROOM,  
HERAT

"We are treating a lot of patients and at times we've been close to being overwhelmed. In the intensive care unit, we've had up to three children in each bed. That's 50 extremely sick children in a space intended for 20.

We've seen a lot of malnourished children, but the biggest problem we're facing at the moment is measles. This year the whole of Afghanistan, not just our project in Herat, has seen a huge increase in cases. We're currently seeing more than 200 cases a week, mostly children under five years old –

60 per cent of whom need to be admitted and need extra care.

Measles is easily preventable by vaccination, but the crisis in Afghanistan means that there aren't enough vaccines here. Not enough children are being vaccinated.

One little girl was brought to us who was about three months old. She was tiny, had a red, blotchy rash spreading down her body and was struggling to breathe. We rushed her to the resuscitation table, but her breathing got worse. She had measles and pneumonia and she was exhausted. We'd all seen this before, when a child's body runs out of energy, runs out of fight.

In intensive care we see such sick, sick kids. And there are some days when you just think: 'Everyone is so sick, how is this going to get better?'

But we weren't ready to give up on her. As a team, we worked to treat her and keep her alive. Her mother

was with us the whole time, talking to her baby, stroking her hair. We worked for so long and tried so many things and eventually her breathing began to improve, and she slowly came back to us.

Ever since then, we've been busy. We've opened a new 60-bed unit for measles patients and we're hopeful that we'll be able to save even more lives.

Much of the world's attention is focused on Ukraine at the moment. But even with so many terrible things happening in the world, I hope the people of Afghanistan will not be forgotten. The situation here is very hard and people still desperately need our help."

Above: MSF doctor Solveig K  be with Nyayesh, eight months old. Nyayesh was severely malnourished and had pneumonia when she was admitted to the intensive care unit of the MSF-supported paediatric department of Herat Regional Hospital. Photograph    MSF

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# ANNIVERSARIES

**HELEN CARR** highlights events that took place in June in history

**29 JUNE 1613**

## The Globe theatre burns to the ground

*Cannon fire sparks a blaze during a Shakespeare play*

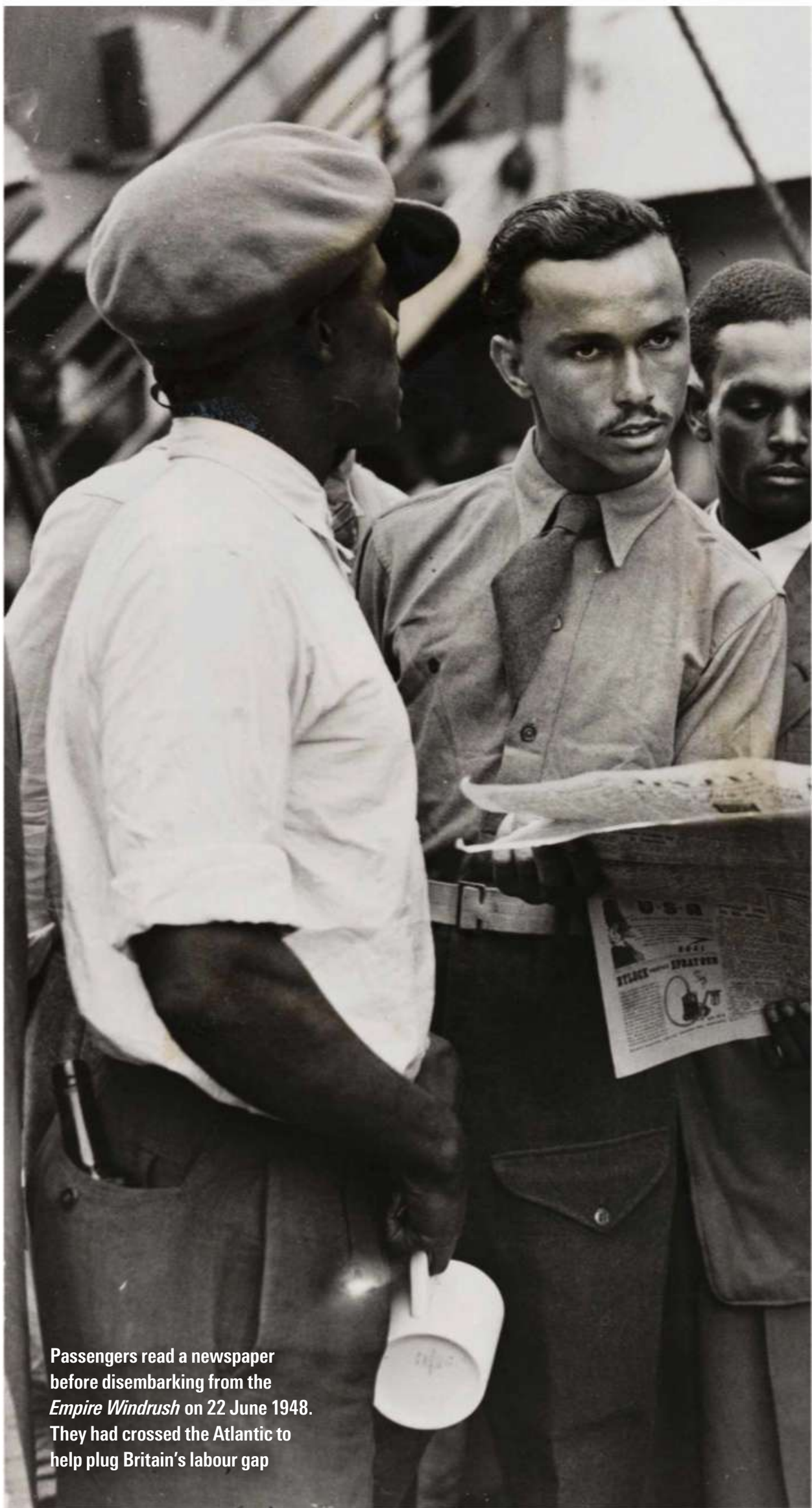
It's fair to say that *All Is True* isn't one of Shakespeare's best-known plays – not least because it's now more widely called *Henry VIII*, and is believed to have been co-written with another playwright, John Fletcher. So its first recorded performance – at the Globe theatre on the banks of the Thames in June 1613 – might have sunk into obscurity had it not been for the disaster that brought it to an untimely end.

The production company clearly wanted the play – which centres on Henry's marriage to Catherine of Aragon – to go off with a bang. And so, at a climactic moment in the performance, a cannon was fired towards the theatre's famous open roof.

The explosion certainly made an impact, but for all the wrong reasons. Sparks set the thick thatched roof smouldering and, before long, smoke was creeping through the rafters. At first, nobody in the crowd seemed to notice – according to one on-looker, "their eyes [were] more attentive to the show" – but soon the fire had become impossible to ignore. Remarkably, nobody was hurt in the blaze, though one man's breeches caught alight (his skin was literally saved when someone soaked him in beer).

The Globe itself wasn't so lucky and the inferno quickly swept through the building. The theatre that had been built by Shakespeare's playing company in 1599, and had put on some of his most famous plays, was burned to cinders.

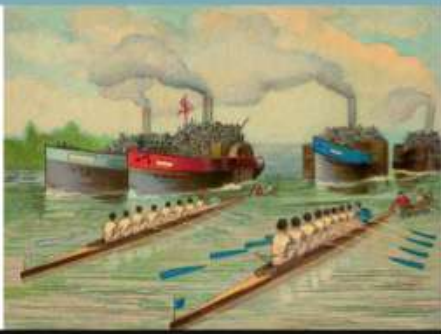
A wood engraving of the Globe as it appeared in c1598. In 1613 the theatre went up in flames during a performance of *All Is True*



Passengers read a newspaper before disembarking from the *Empire Windrush* on 22 June 1948. They had crossed the Atlantic to help plug Britain's labour gap

GETTY IMAGES

Ready to row:  
A c19th-century  
illustration of an Oxford  
v Cambridge boat race



**10 JUNE 1829**

The first Oxford v Cambridge boat race takes place at Henley-on-Thames, with Oxford crossing the line first to win 500 guineas. The annual event now covers a 4.2-mile stretch of the Thames between Putney and Mortlake.

**22 JUNE 1948**

## The Windrush arrives at Tilbury

*West Indian émigrés answer Britain's call for help*

On a grey, misty day in June 1948, a former German passenger liner arrived at Tilbury docks on the Thames Estuary – to a storm of media attention. The name of the vessel was the *Empire Windrush* and its arrival in Britain that day – after setting off from Kingston, Jamaica a month earlier – is now widely remembered as a landmark moment in modern British history.

The reason for its significance lies not in the identity of the ship itself, but in the men and women it had carried across the Atlantic. The hundreds of people who disembarked from the *Windrush* made up one of the first large groups of West Indians to emigrate to postwar Britain – and they had made the journey because their help was needed.

Three years after the end of the Second World War, severe labour shortages were proving a drag on the British economy. In response, the government came up with the British Nationality Act 1948, giving citizens of Britain's colonies and the Commonwealth the right to settle in the UK.

Some of those who stepped off the *Windrush* in June 1948 had already arranged accommodation and work. Others, however, arrived with nothing to do and nowhere to live. Some 230 passengers set up home in an old air-raid shelter in Clapham before heading to the labour exchange in neighbouring Brixton. Hostility to their arrival was widespread. Those looking for homes to rent often encountered signs declaring "NO BLACKS"; others were beaten for befriending white people.

For all that, many of the *Windrush's* passengers thrived in England. None more so than Sam King, a former RAF engineer. King not only went on to become mayor of Southwark, but helped launch the forerunner of the Notting Hill Carnival. Today, more than 70 years after the *Windrush's* famous journey, the carnival is cherished as a celebration of Caribbean culture in London.



A coloured print shows the French army outside Moscow during its ill-fated invasion of Russia



## 24 JUNE 1812

French forces under **Napoleon Bonaparte** cross the **Neman river**, so launching their invasion of **Russia**. The French leader captures Moscow in September but, his army largely destroyed, he retreats the following month.



Rebels murder Simon of Sudbury in the Tower of London, as depicted in a 15th-century manuscript. It took eight blows to remove the archbishop's head

## 14 JUNE 1381

# The archbishop of Canterbury loses his head

*The Peasants' Revolt claims its most high-profile victim*

**T**he Tower of London is an imposing fortress, looming intimidatingly over the banks of the Thames. However, it isn't completely impregnable – that much

was proven in the most dramatic fashion in June 1381 by a group of rebels hell-bent on securing social justice.

During the early summer, an uprising had gathered pace in England – a “pitchfork rebellion” of the common people against the government. Known to posterity as the Peasants' Revolt, the disorder reached a climax on 14 June when rebels broke into the Tower through an open gate, aiming to arrest and punish some of the most powerful men in the realm.

The rebels didn't find King Richard II inside the fortress – he had already ridden out that morning to make terms with the “peasant” army at Mile End. However, they

*did* discover Simon Sudbury, archbishop of Canterbury (whom they regarded as one of their chief oppressors), cowering in the chapel of the White Tower.

Unfortunately for Sudbury, his captors weren't in a merciful mood, and he was soon dragged away to Tower Hill to meet his maker. It allegedly took eight clumsy blows to remove his head, which was then paraded through the streets before being impaled on London Bridge.

Sudbury's skull survives to this day, and is held in St Gregory's Church in Sudbury, Suffolk – a grisly memento of a momentary shift of power from the hands of the elite to the people of England.



Dickens tends to an injured woman following the fatal train crash that haunted him for the rest of his life

**9 JUNE 1865**

## Charles Dickens survives a deadly train crash

*The author joins in with the relief effort*

**O**n the afternoon of 9 June 1865, Charles Dickens was sitting in a first-class train compartment racing across the Kent countryside. The author had visited Paris with his mistress, Ellen Ternan, and her mother – and now all three were heading back to London.

But the train would never reach its destination. At 3.13pm, as it sped across a viaduct at Staplehurst, it hit a missing section of the track, which had been removed by workmen. The train was thrown into the air, plunging seven carriages into the quagmire below. Dickens's carriage was dragged partially off the bridge.

Luckily, the author was able to clamber free. He then rushed to the carcass of the crushed train to offer his help. He must have been greeted by a shocking scene: 10 passengers had died in the crash and 40 more were injured. According to one eyewitness, Dickens offered "comfort [to] every poor creature he met who had sustained serious injury", and delivered brandy to a man dying on the banks.

Amid the turmoil, Dickens still found time to return to his carriage to retrieve an important item. There, from his overcoat pocket, he recovered the manuscript of the latest instalment of the novel he was working on.

The Staplehurst train crash affected Dickens for the rest of his life. Following the incident, he suffered "faint" and "sick" sensations. Yet he still completed the novel. It would be known as *Our Mutual Friend*. **H**

**Helen Carr** is a historian and writer. She is the author of *The Red Prince* (Oneworld, 2021)

# WHY WE SHOULD REMEMBER...

**200 YEARS AGO**

## The public announcement of the **Difference Engine**, which marked the start of automatic computing

BY **DORON SWADE**

### What was the Difference Engine?

It was an automatic calculating machine designed by Charles Babbage (1791–1871), English mathematician and polymath. He conceived the machine in 1821, in response to a dismaying number of errors in mathematical tables calculated by hand. The supposed infallibility of machinery would eliminate the risk of human error in the calculation and production of printed tables on which science, engineering and commerce heavily relied. On 14 June 1822 – 200 years ago this month – Babbage announced his invention, in a paper read to the Royal Astronomical Society on 14 June 1822.

### When was a Difference Engine successfully built?

For a complex variety of reasons, Babbage failed to build a complete Difference Engine. His engineer, Joseph Clement, completed one-seventh of the full machine in 1832; it worked impeccably, but the project was abandoned following a dispute about payment. The first complete working Babbage engine is Difference Engine No 2, designed 1847–49 and completed at London's Science Museum in 2002 – built faithfully to the original 19th-century designs. It weighs 5 tonnes, has 8,000 mechanical parts and is some 3.4 metres long.

### How did it shape the future of computing?

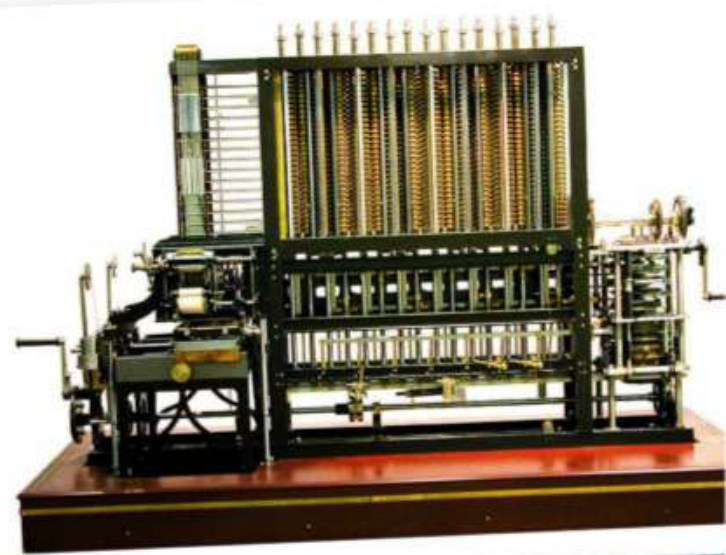
Barely, if at all; pioneers of modern computing re-invented the principles and practice of computing almost entirely in ignorance of the detail of Babbage's work. But the legend of what he had done endured, and the viability of machine computation was afterwards little doubted.

### Why should we remember this invention today?

The Difference Engine was the first complete design for a computing

engine. The small section completed in 1832 was the first successful automatic calculating machine to be built, and is the single most-celebrated icon in the prehistory of computing. A user, by cranking a handle, and without necessarily understanding how it worked, could achieve results that up to that time could be accomplished only by mental effort. "He [Babbage]," wrote a contemporary, "had taught wheel work to think."

So Babbage's engine represents the start of automatic computing, and also the start of machine intelligence, for which autonomous action is the first prerequisite. Though not itself a general-purpose machine (we would now call it a special-function calculator), the Difference Engine led directly to one that was – the Analytical Engine. This was conceived by Babbage by 1834, and its designs contain just about every logical feature of the modern digital computer. **H**



Difference Engine No 2, completed at London's Science Museum in 2002. It was built to the 19th-century specifications of its inventor, Charles Babbage



**Doron Swade** is a museum professional specialising in the history of computing

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## HIDDEN HISTORIES

**KAVITA PURI** explores lesser-known stories from our past

# // The strike has links to a far longer story of female south Asian protest //

It's late on a Sunday evening in a street in west London, and the air is thick with the smell of freshly fried pakoras. Pammi Bains, who lives in one of the terraced houses, has been cooking.

Pammi was part of a strike action that disrupted Heathrow airport for two days in the summer of 2005. It was an act of resistance with links to a far longer history of female south Asian protest in Britain. She says it changed her life, but few know the story of her and her fellow strikers.

Pammi was part of a workforce of predominantly Indian Punjabi women, who were employed at Gate Gourmet preparing food trays for British Airways flights. She had happily worked there for 12 years and her colleagues had become her friends, singing along to Punjabi music while they worked at the conveyor belt. But by the summer of 2005, Gate Gourmet's BA contract had been renegotiated. Pammi's employers were making cuts and trying to alter working conditions, and her union was pushing back.

Then, on the morning of 10 August 2005, agency staff were brought in to do the jobs on weaker conditions. The astounded employees gathered for an impromptu meeting in which they were told by management to return to work or face the sack. Union representatives told the workers to stay put. Hundreds didn't go back, and were sacked over megaphone. Pammi had just turned up for the late shift and saw her colleagues streaming out in tears, saying they had lost their jobs. She left the premises with them. The following day, Pammi heard that she, too, had lost her job.

The next day, British Airways baggage carriers walked out in support of the Gate Gourmet workers. This resulted

in BA being grounded for two days in the middle of the summer holidays. The British press largely supported travellers facing disruption, not the protesting women.

The women's actions recalled the infamous strike at the Grunwick film processing labs in north-west London between 1976 and 1978, which involved mostly south Asian women who had come from east Africa. They were campaigning for better conditions and wages and, while they didn't succeed in their initial aims, their readiness to stand up for their rights changed perceptions of Asian women. Those protesters received some support from the trade unions, which had traditionally not always backed south Asian women, but the Gate Gourmet protesters were fighting to keep their jobs in a very different world: one of globalisation, weaker trade union protections, and cheaper labour as the EU expanded into eastern Europe. These women were squeezed between these forces.

*Striking Women: Struggles and Strategies of South Asian Women Workers from Grunwick to Gate Gourmet* (L&W, 2018) by Sundari Anitha and Ruth Pearson is the first book to look at these events through the women's lived experiences. It argues that the public memory of the Grunwick strikers – and, particularly, their iconic leader Jayaben Desai – is far better known. There was an inquiry into what happened, conducted by Lord Scarman. But few people have asked the Gate Gourmet women about their experiences, and there was no public inquiry. They have been largely forgotten in the longer struggle of female British south Asian workers' rights.

The union did negotiate for some workers to return to Gate Gourmet in the late summer of 2005, though on worse conditions than before. They also secured redundancy payments for all staff. But Pammi refused a payout, as she would have had to drop her unfair dismissal claim against the firm. She and a group of other women carried on their protests outside Gate Gourmet for months. They were fed twice a day by the local gurdwara and supported by members of the public, including south Asian women from the Grunwick strike three decades earlier.

Pammi and her fellow workers' case was eventually dismissed by the employment tribunal. It ruled that as they did not return to work, they were effectively taking part in unofficial strike action. Even today, Pammi cries as she remembers that time and how hard it was to get a job, because her role in the protests led to her being seen as a troublemaker. But she has no regrets about the stand that she took, even though it ended in failure. "This should not be happening with the working class. If this is happening with me, then it can happen with my daughter – it can happen with [the] next generation as well. Who will stand up with them? I know every fight is not for win[ning]. But at least we tried to do that." **H**

### Kavita Puri

is a journalist, author and broadcaster. Her BBC Radio 4 series *Three Pounds in My Pocket* is currently available on BBC Sounds



Former Gate Gourmet employees gather at a union meeting, August 2005. The actions of women such as Pammi Bains (below) have largely been forgotten, says Kavita Puri





Napoleon as depicted in an 1812 portrait. The French leader was committed to political and social reform, argues reader Colin Bullen

## LETTER OF THE MONTH

### Alternative medicine

Helen Rappaport's article on Mary Seacole (April) was fascinating, but Seacole wasn't the only "alternative" to Florence Nightingale. Betsi Cadwaladr, from Bala in north Wales, spent many months working with the troops on the front lines, providing warm food, bandaging wounds and caring for the men.

Cadwaladr [seen below in a contemporary portrait] had travelled the world as companion and servant to various sea captains, and became convinced that cleanliness was an essential ingredient in the treatment of wounded and sick patients. She went out to Crimea as part of the second group of Nightingale Nurses, but clashed with Florence from the start. "I did not like the name Nightingale," she wrote. "When I learn a name I know by my feelings whether I shall like the person who bears it." The dislike was reciprocated by Nightingale, but when she visited the lines and saw the work Cadwaladr was doing – as well as the affection she was held in by the troops – she changed her mind. She begged Cadwaladr to stay on, but old age and exhaustion had taken their toll.

Cadwaladr returned to England where she died in 1860, very much a forgotten hero. She was buried in the paupers' section of Abney cemetery in north London, and it took more than a century for a memorial

to be erected over her grave. The naming of a Health Board in north Wales after the redoubtable Betsi in 2009 was an honour that she would have found more in keeping with her life and work.

**Phil Carradice,**  
St Athan



We reward the *Letter of the Month* writer with a copy of a new history book. This issue, that is **1945: Victory in the West** by Peter Caddick-Adams. You can read our review of the book on page 76

### In defence of Napoleon

I feel that the article concerning Napoleon (April) was unfair to its subject. While his later career frequently saw his original ideals undermined by the reality of power, he was from the first a believer in the revolution, as his letters and general writings make clear. After his early victories in Italy, he set up the Cisalpine and Ligurian republics, based upon the constitution of the New France, and when he occupied Malta in 1798 he abolished slavery and feudal privileges, while Jews were given equal rights to Christians.

Although his wars led to a great loss of human life, Napoleon was not a monster like some of the individuals who disfigured the following centuries. He was unquestionably one of the greatest military commanders of all time; he refused to accept the policies espoused by the extreme Jacobins and put an end to their vicious insanities; and in the lands he conquered he attempted to implement reforms aimed at bettering the lot of the ordinary people.

**Colin Bullen,** Kent

### Imperial pride

Noting the trite heading of your review of Caroline Elkins' book *Legacy of Violence: A History of the British Empire* (April) – "The Brutish Empire" – I should have realised the direction the article would take. True to form, it launched straight into another tirade against the British empire.

I do not claim to be able to see history in the proverbial black and white, nor know all the answers to such complex questions as "was the empire a good or bad thing?". What I *do* know – along with, I expect, many of your readers – is that I am personally very proud of the contribution that our tiny island brought to so many corners of the world, and demand a level of impartiality and balance in the magazine when considering such matters.

While it cannot be denied that the empire was responsible for horrific behaviours, for every negative there is also arguably a positive – as in so many areas of history. So much of the old empire bears the legacies of legal and political frameworks, transport and commerce, education, police and civil administration established because of the dastardly British empire.

Alex von Tunzelmann's review ignores this legacy when considering the impact of the empire on the present, as well as conveniently ignoring the impact of corruption, tyranny and, yes, violence on a genocidal level by many post-empire regimes.

**Andrew Crabbe,** Yorkshire

### Slate and slavery

In the interview with Neil MacGregor about Britain's museums (April), he states that the fortune the Dawkins-Pennant family made from exporting slate [in the 19th century] enabled them to build Penrhyn Castle and assemble an impressive art collection. I was surprised, however, that no mention was made of the significant wealth Richard Pennant derived from his ownership of nearly 1,000 slaves across four plantations in Jamaica, nor of the £14,683 he received in compensation for the freeing of those slaves following abolition in 1833. This wealth may well have been key in enabling the family to build the castle, extend quarrying, and pay for roads, houses and schools in north Wales.

**David James,** Malvern

### A pluralist republic

Anna Keay's article on the Commonwealth (*The People's Republic of Britain*, April) rightly points to the plurality of religious opinion tolerated in that period, but there is one significant omission from her list of dissenting religions: Judaism. Jews had been banished from England by Edward I in 1290, once their use as financiers to the crown had dwindled. Jews in England subsequently practised their ancestral religion secretly, particularly in the early 17th century. It was only in 1656 that Oliver Cromwell – in the face of religious opposition and fear of economic competition – permitted Jews to come to England to live and worship openly.

Cromwell's motivation appears to have been both economic and religious. Jews in the Netherlands, Spain and Portugal had built successful trading empires, particularly in the New World – an area of key interest to Cromwell, as evidenced by the capture of Jamaica from the Spanish in 1655. He also believed that the reintroduction of Jews to England and their conversion to Christianity would hasten the advent of the Messiah and the dawning of a new Christian golden age.



Penrhyn Castle in north Wales, which reader David James suggests may have been funded by slavery as well as by the local slate industry



Oliver Cromwell hears a petition for Jewish people to be readmitted to England in this 20th-century illustration. Reader Anthony Rabin highlights the period's new religious tolerance

In turn, some families were attracted by the opportunity to expand their trading empires – and, in the case of Spanish and Portuguese Jews, escape religious persecution. Although their numbers were relatively small, they were increasingly influential on English society and commerce.

**Anthony Rabin**, London

### Nasty, brutish, or short

As we watch the endless horrors unfolding in Ukraine, a recurring thought has struck me. Should some worthy academic decide to compile a history of the world excluding all mention of our inhumanity towards each other, it would result in a very slender volume. When Carl Linnaeus first coined the name *homo sapiens* for our deeply flawed species, I fear his perception of the human race was perhaps coloured by the Enlightenment and not by a realistic reading of the past.

**Jill Stewart-Rattray**, Devon

### Correction

► In May's feature on the Persians, *Empire of the Greats*, we incorrectly stated that the date of the battle of Marathon was 499 BC whereas it was actually 490 BC. Thanks to the readers who got in touch to point out this error.

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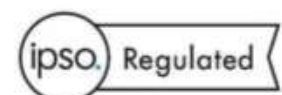
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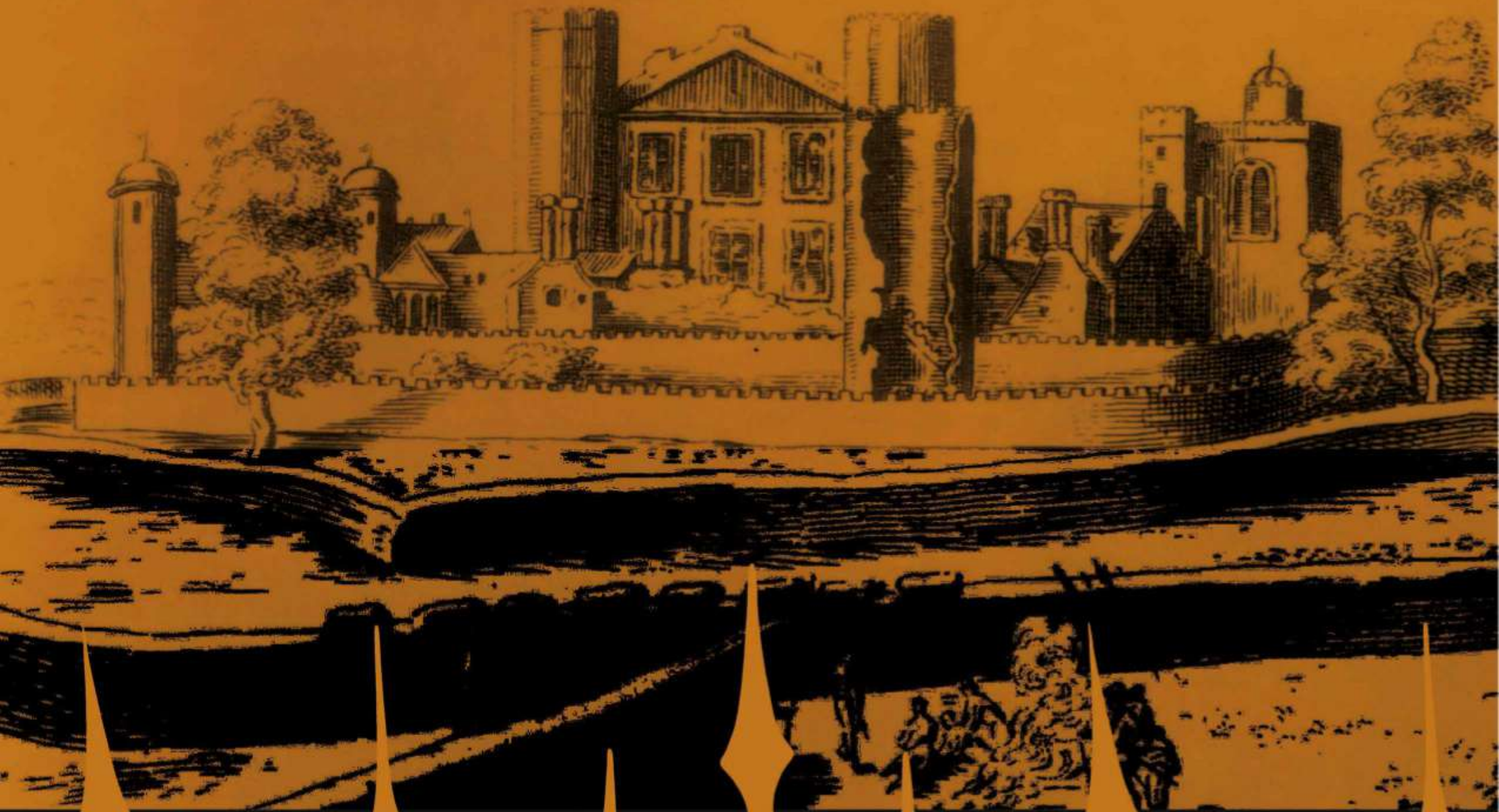
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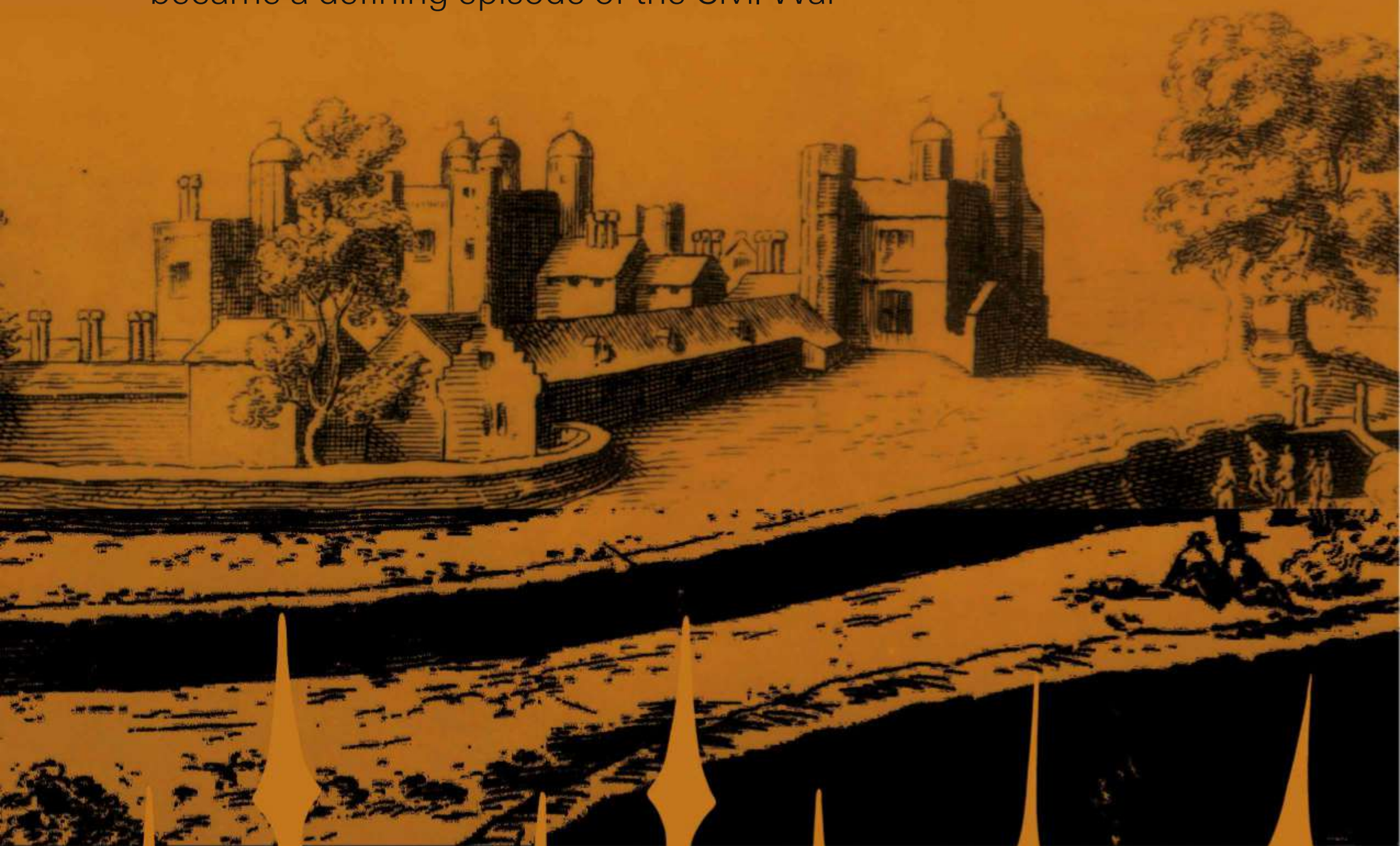
# THE SIEGE



## **In the line of fire**

The siege of Basing House, in a contemporary engraving. The royalist stronghold was seen as a “microcosm of Stuart degeneracy”, which the parliamentarians were determined to purge

When some 6,000 parliamentarians tried to prise a few hundred royalists out of Basing House in 1643, they began a brutal siege that would drag on for years – and see thousands slaughtered. **Jessie Childs** tells the story of a desperate struggle that became a defining episode of the Civil War



**O**n a plant-finding expedition to Kent in 1633, the apothecary Thomas Johnson looked out from the tower of Canterbury Cathedral and despaired at the inadequacy of the town's defences. "Our people," he lamented, "like the Spartans of old, set more store upon arms than upon walls for protection." A decade later, Lieutenant Colonel Johnson was shoring up the defences of Basing House in Hampshire, ahead of an imminent parliamentary attack – and presumably wishing that someone had listened to him earlier.

We have always preferred the glamour of the battle to the dog-work of a siege. We hear the rumble of the cavalry charge and the first dry rattle of new-drawn steel more keenly than the sound of digging and guard duty. We imagine the king's battle standard rescued at Edgehill and the royalist horse reduced to "stubble" by Cromwell's troops on Marston Moor, but a half-starved garrison negotiating terms of surrender is rarely part of the picture.

Yet the Civil War was not only won at Marston Moor, nor even at Naseby when Charles I lost his artillery and a large part of his officer corps in June 1645. It was won three months later, at Bristol, when his nephew Prince Rupert yielded England's second city and, with it, his command of the royalist army. It was won when further strongholds were taken and destroyed, securing parliament's supply lines and, ultimately, giving the king nowhere to hide.

From Hull, where arguably the war began in July 1642, to Harlech, where the last

**"We make war more like foxes than lions," wrote Roger Boyle. "You will have 20 sieges for one battle"**

royalist garrison surrendered in March 1647, the first Civil War was predominantly fought around walled towns, medieval castles and fortified manor houses. Each side had areas of dominance, but this was not a regional conflict in the sense, say, of the American Civil War, with a geographically defined North and South. Once it became clear that the war between king and parliament would not be decided by one big battle, it mushroomed into hundreds of local contests for resources, supply lines and communications. In Ireland, too, the fighting was characterised by batteries and blockades, skirmishes and storms. "We make war more like foxes than like lions," wrote Roger Boyle, 1st Earl of Orrery, "and you will have 20 sieges for one battle."

### Terrorised towns

This all matters because the nature of the Civil War helps to explain the pity of it, the scope of it, and its consequences – not least for the king. The causes of the war were by no



### The king's man

John Paulet, 5th Marquess of Winchester (above) owned Basing House and was a staunch supporter of Charles I. He set up his home as a refuge for royalist families

means clear-cut, but Charles was executed because enough people in power believed that only a ruthless tyrant could renew hostilities, as Charles had done in 1648 (again suffering defeat), after so much slaughter. Charles, the army leaders decided, was a "man of blood" against whom the Lord had witnessed and by whom an account must be made "for that blood he had shed and mischief he had done".

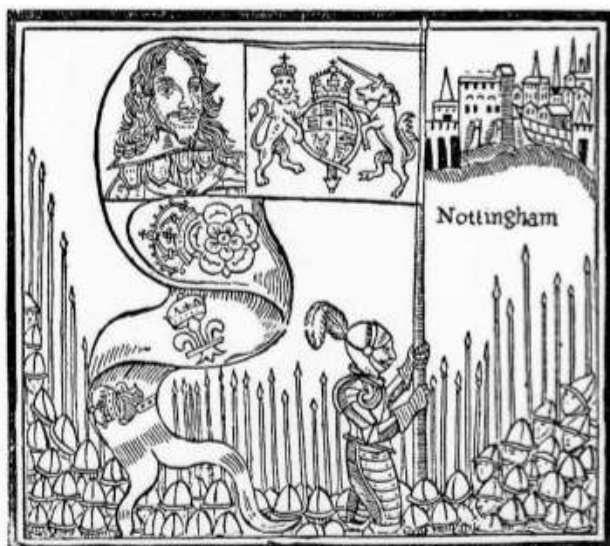
We hardly have to look back to the 17th century to know that when neighbourhoods become frontlines, civilians pay the price. Sieges terrorised local communities, spread disease and sucked the produce from the land. Houses were destroyed to provide field of fire, "contribution money" was collected by both sides, and farms were stripped bare.

ALAMY/GETTY IMAGES

## TIMELINE King and parliament at war

### 22 August 1642

Following years of escalating tensions between **Charles I** and his opponents – fanned by his dismissal of parliament, imposition of taxes and attempts to impose religious uniformity – **the king raises his standard at Nottingham**. This signals the official start of the Civil War between royalist and parliamentary forces.



**Charles I raises his standard at Nottingham, heralding the official start of the Civil War**

### 23 October 1642

**The war's first big battle at Edgehill** (Warwickshire) produces no decisive winner and consigns the country to a long conflict fought locally around fortified strongholds.



**The king talks tactics before the battle of Edgehill, the first big clash of the conflict**

### 10 August 1643

**King Charles besieges Gloucester** but withdraws the following month upon the approach of the Earl of Essex, chief commander of the parliamentary army. The armies clash at **Newbury** on 20 September; the result is inconclusive.

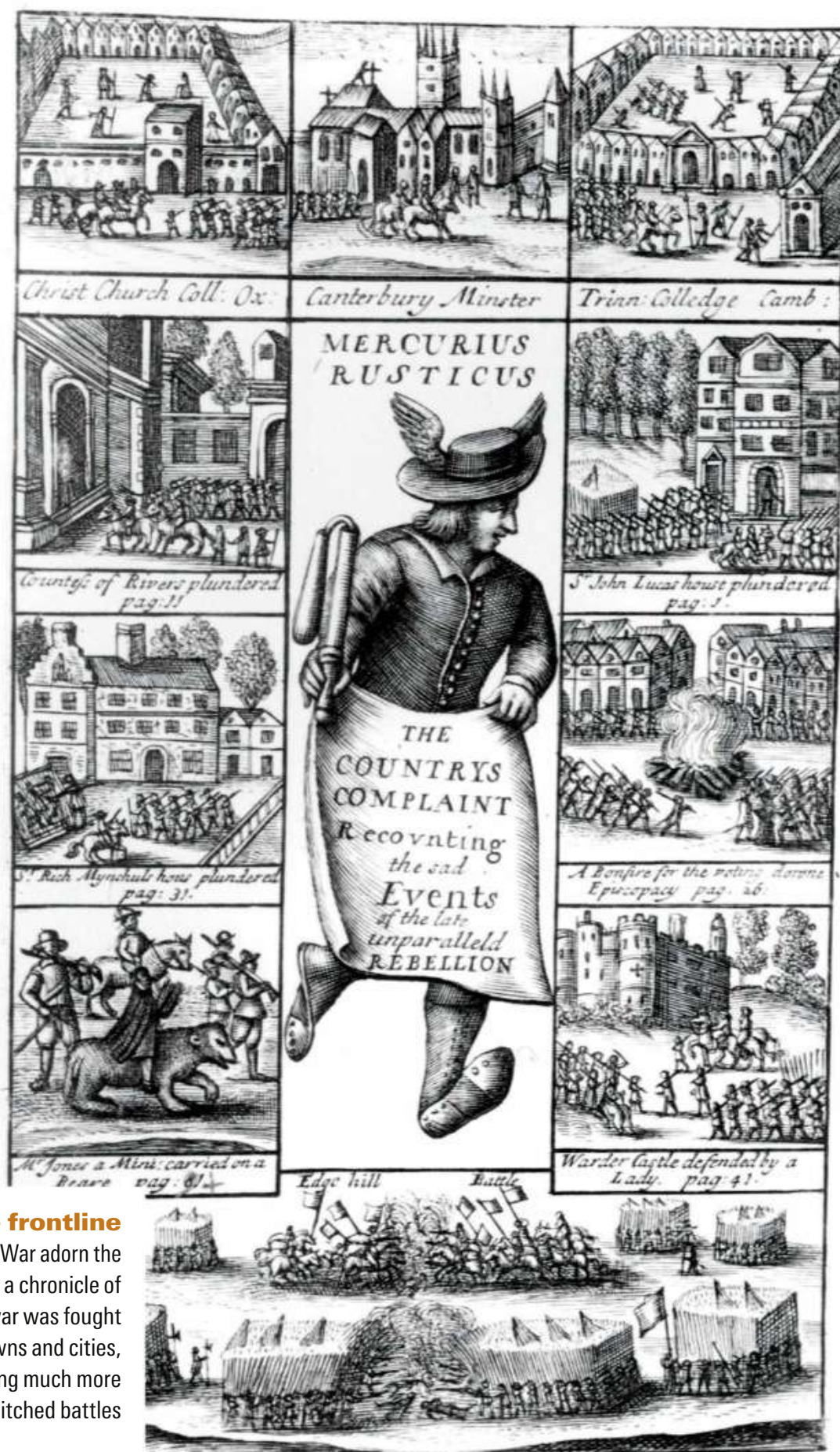
The almsfolk at the hospital of St Mary Magdalen near Winchester lost 36 sheep to the royalists over Christmas 1643. They didn't complain at the time, but the following March they were forced to petition General Ralph Hopton after royalists broke in and took all their seed barley and every bit of wood – the gates, doors, wainscot, tables, cupboards, even the pews in their chapel. "Your poor petitioners," they wrote, "being very aged and impotent persons [are] thereby made destitute of the means of having either temporal or spiritual food." Hopton signed a protection order, but by then there wasn't even a stable door left to close.

### Strategy and symbolism

A series of sieges at Basing House, 20 miles north-east of Winchester, illustrates the hard lessons parliament had to learn before it could win the war. Basing House was the mist-shrouded mansion of John Paulet, 5th Marquess of Winchester. Said to be "the greatest of any subject's house in England", it was encircled by a deep ditch and thick, earth-lined walls. Situated 40 miles south of the king's headquarters in Oxford, and 50 miles south-west of parliamentary London, it disrupted military and commercial traffic between the capital and the west and channelled resources and intelligence up to Oxford.

Symbolically, too, Basing House – a refuge for prominent royalist families and their treasure chests – was vital. It came to be viewed from London as a microcosm of Stuart degeneracy. The marquess was Catholic – a "papist" to use the contemporary slur – while his wife, Honora, was half-Irish [for more on Honora, see our box on page 28]. Their beleaguered guests included actors, artists, writers and the architect Inigo Jones who helped with

BRIDGEMAN



### Life on the frontline

Scenes from the Civil War adorn the 1685 frontispiece of a chronicle of the conflict. The war was fought around walled towns and cities, with sieges being much more prevalent than pitched battles

### 1 July 1644

Charles's nephew Prince Rupert relieves York for the royalists, but is defeated the following day by a joint Scottish and parliamentary force on **Marston Moor**.

Prince Rupert, Charles I's nephew, in a 17th-century painting. He commanded the royalist cavalry



### 31 May 1645

Rupert sacks Leicester in the presence of the king. The royalists march south and meet the New Model Army at **Naseby** on 14 June, where Charles loses his artillery and many of his officers.

### 10 September 1645

Bristol, England's second city, falls to the New Model Army. "Doubtless God is with them," one Puritan preacher declares.



A map of Bristol in the 17th century. The city was taken by the New Model Army in 1645

## Civil War sieges

the fortifications. To Puritans, Basing House was “a limb of Babylon”, “a nest of the vilest vermin in all the kingdom”. It was here, announced one preacher, that “religion and laws and liberties and the very being of our English nation lie at stake”. It took parliament more than two years to figure out how to take it.

### Thwarting “the Conqueror”

The first major assault on Basing House – after a failed local attack in July – was commanded by William “the Conqueror” Waller, a Puritan general who detested “this war without an enemy”, but was nevertheless certain that God would help him win it. He set down before Basing House on 6 November 1643 with around 6,000 men. The garrison comprised 400 defenders. It was, Waller was told, “but a slight piece”.

The marquess refused Waller’s summons to surrender and presented stiff resistance the following day. A sortie led by the apothecary Thomas Johnson resulted in the farm out-houses being set alight and Waller’s men either burned to death or in flight.

The following week, Waller decided to have “another fling at Basing”. Again, his ratio was good, but almost half his force was made up of Londoners who were not keen on service beyond the capital. Everything that could go wrong for Waller went wrong on 12 November 1643. The Londoners’ lack of morale and discipline was exposed when they were blasted with case shot (canisters filled with musket balls) and refused to drive on. Another unit forgot their musket drills, so that the second ranks fired before the first had time to turn away and the “third ranks fired upon them, and so, consequently, the rear fired upon their own front and slew and wounded many of their own men”.



### Hitting a brick wall

William “the Conqueror” Waller (shown here) was tasked with taking Basing House for the parliamentarians. However, his attempts to seize the mansion ended in disaster

Waller fared better on the house’s east front, but his scaling ladders were too short, his petard (a bell-shaped bomb) was clamped to the wrong place and, again, the resistance was epic. A sniper inside the house picked off charging assailants, while women threw down bricks and stones from the roof. “Come up Roundheads if ye dare!” they screamed. At four in the afternoon, darkness and driving rain forced Waller to withdraw. One soldier, left behind with a shattered leg, cried out for help. What, shouted the defenders of the house, had the king ever done to him to make him rebel? At which question, one royalist newsbook reported, “this desperate wretch pulled out his knife and cut his own throat”.

The following morning Waller wanted to resume the assault. But, having slept out in the cold and sodden fields, and hearing that a royalist relief force was on its way, the Londoners chanted “Home! Home!” and Waller was forced to relent. His report made clear that, although God had chastised them with this beating, parliament should have supplied better men.

The second attempt on Basing House was a summer blockade imposed by the local Roundhead, Richard “Idle Dick” Norton. It lasted for 24 weeks and was hell for both sides. Smallpox, starvation, heavy shelling and internal tensions brought the royalists to the brink of collapse, but the garrison commander, a gnarly merchant called Marmaduke Rawdon, promised the marquess that his men would never surrender for as long as there was “a horse in the house, dog, cat or rat, or anything that is eatable”. He asked only for some wine and good tobacco from the marquess’s stores.

By autumn, the defenders looked more like “prisoners of the grave than the keepers

**Smallpox, starvation and heavy shelling brought the royalists to the brink of collapse, but they refused to surrender**

### 5 May 1646

Charles surrenders to the Scots at Southwell, Nottinghamshire (hoping they will be more sympathetic captors than parliament), and orders his garrisons to surrender. Handed on to parliament in 1647, the king is eventually **executed on 30 January 1649**.

Oliver Cromwell, in a contemporary engraving. His troops slaughtered royalists at Drogheda



### 11 September 1649

Oliver Cromwell’s forces storm Drogheda and slaughter its royalist defenders in what was the most notorious episode in his bloody, siege-based campaign in Ireland.

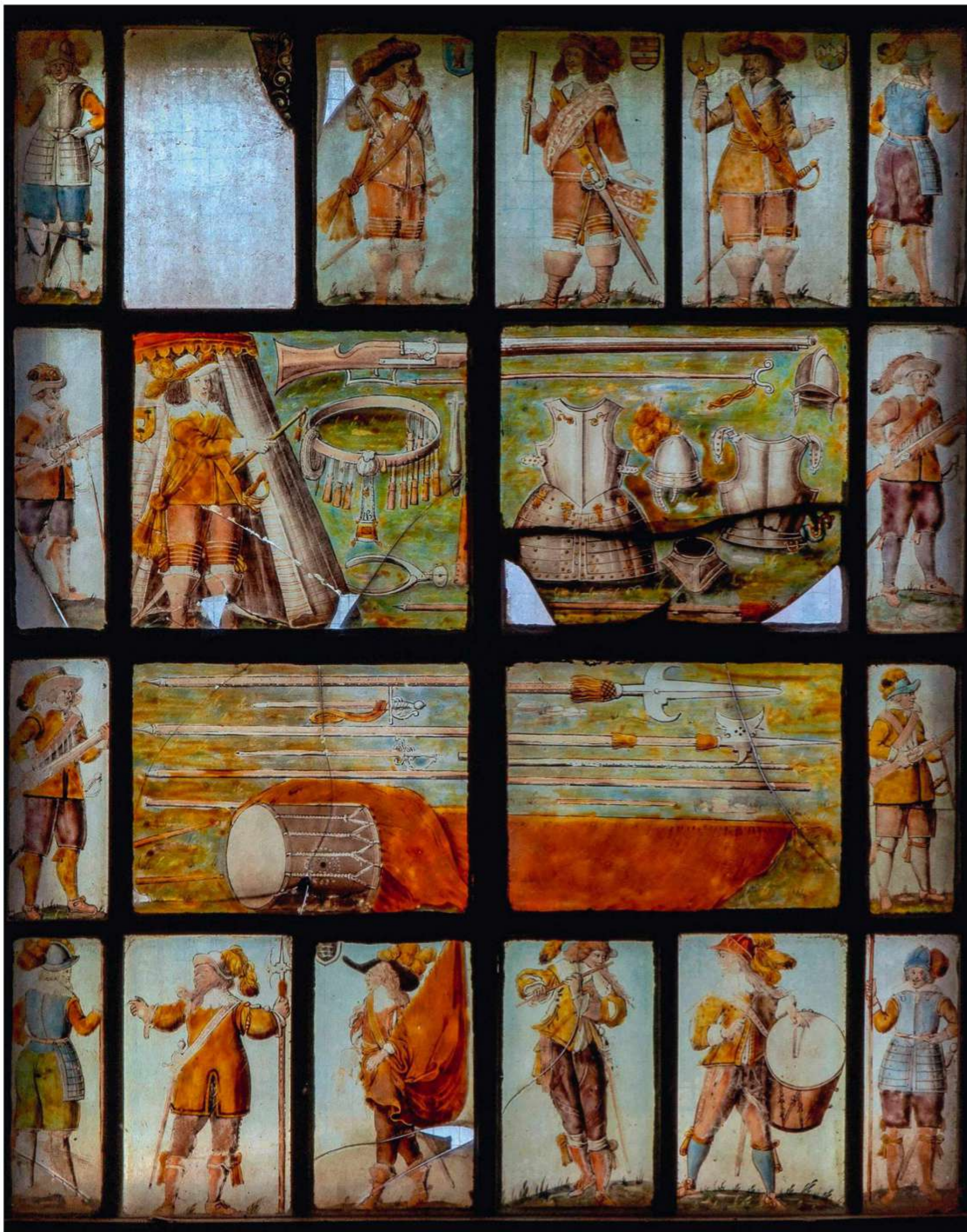
### 3 September 1651

Cromwell storms Worcester. Charles II goes on the run and eventually escapes to France. He will not return for nine years. On 16 December 1653, **Cromwell is appointed Lord Protector** of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland and Ireland.

The battle of Worcester, the final clash of the Civil War. It ended in parliamentary victory



BRIDGEMAN/GETTY IMAGES



**Defending home ground** This 1662 stained-glass window memorialises the royalist garrison that defended Chester from a parliamentary siege. It shows officers and ordinary soldiers, such as pikemen and musketeers, as well as a military flautist and drummer on the bottom panel. At Basing House the defenders' ranks also included women, who threw bricks and stones from the roof onto the heads of attackers below





**Darkest hour** A modern depiction by the artist Mike Codd of the storming of Basing House by Oliver Cromwell and the New Model Army on 14 October 1645. The attack began at 6am on the “New House” in the east. The 300 defenders fought ferociously, but were pushed back to the “Old House” in the west, where they made their last stand

## A royalist relief force braved two night-marches through enemy territory, donning parliament’s colours as a disguise

of a castle”. But marshland in front of the house ensured that it was never fully surrounded and, sometime over the summer, the Marchioness of Winchester slipped out to Oxford where she implored her fellow Catholic, Henry Gage, to save them.

Anyone who thinks that 17th-century soldiering was primitive work should study this exceptional operation. At 10pm on 9 September 1644, Gage led a royalist relief force on two night-marches through enemy-held territory. Each man was disguised with an orange-tawny scarf – parliament’s colours – and the troopers shared their horses with the footsore infantry. Gage was the first to do this, inspiring the rest.

On the outskirts of Basing House, having swapped their orange scarves for white ribbons, they fought a skirmish with the besiegers – as fierce as any battle for those involved – and managed to cut through the lines and into the house. After raiding Basingstoke on market day, Gage provisioned the garrison, stayed for the night and then, having conducted a disinformation campaign to make the parliamentarians think he would be sticking around for longer, quietly slipped away. He took a different route back to Oxford, swimming the horses over the river Kennet (the troopers took the musketeers up on their saddles) and evading every high-alert patrol. It was, thought one royalist, “the most soldier-like piece these wars have ever yet afforded”.

### Chasing after Charles

A month later, parliament’s southern armies converged around Basing House. They totalled 19,000 men and comprised Waller’s force, Lord General Essex’s main field army and the formidable Eastern Association commanded by the Earl of Manchester and his cavalry officer, Oliver Cromwell. Their scouts told them to expect the king on 21 October, and they drew up in battle array. The following day, though, upon hearing that Charles had wheeled about towards Newbury, they took the road after him. There was no trust between the parliamentary generals at this point and the resulting second battle of

# In the eye of the storm

## FIVE LEADING PLAYERS IN THE BATTLE FOR BASING HOUSE

### ROYALIST

#### The valiant soldier

**Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Johnson** was an apothecary from Yorkshire, and the first person known to have sold bananas in London. A keen plant-hunter, he planned to write a catalogue of the plants of England and Wales. He was one of the most brave and popular officers at Basing House, as valued “for his valour and conduct as a soldier” as “his excellency as a herbalist and physician”. Shot in the shoulder in September 1644, he died two weeks later.

### ROYALIST

#### The fighting matriarch

**Honora, Marchioness of Winchester** was the chatelaine of Basing House. She was the granddaughter of Elizabeth I’s spymaster, Francis Walsingham, and the half-sister of Robert Devereux, the 3rd Earl of Essex and lord general of the parliamentary army. She defended Basing House during the first attack, tearing lead off the roof to cast bullets, and held her broken family together after the Civil War.

Honora, Marchioness of Winchester, helped turn lead from Basing House’s roof into bullets

### ROYALIST

#### The big man in London

**Colonel Marmaduke Rawdon** (below) was the military governor of Basing House. He was a leading London merchant and one of the first colonisers of Barbados. A staunch royalist, he wore a medallion of Charles I around his neck – but his Protestant beliefs made him clash with the Catholic Marquess of Winchester. Rawdon was expelled from the garrison before its last stand.



### ROYALIST

#### The ageing architect

The great designer and architect **Inigo Jones** (shown below) was later described as having been “a very aged, infirm man” at the time he came to Basing House. According to one newsbook, he was brought in to help design the house’s fortifications. At the final storm, he was stripped of his clothes by a parliamentarian soldier (an accepted privilege of plunder) and carried out of the house wrapped in a blanket. He died seven years later, just before his 79th birthday.



### PARLIAMENTARIAN

#### The gleeful regicide

**Hugh Peter** (pictured here in 1660) was a Puritan preacher and a chaplain in the New Model Army. His graphic report of the fall of Basing House depicted the royalist stronghold as a nest of idolatry. The captured women were “entertained by the common soldiers somewhat coarsely”, he said, “yet not uncivilly; they left them with some clothes upon them”. A vigorous promoter of the regicide (though not a signatory of Charles I’s death warrant), he was executed on 16 October 1660.



Newbury on 27 October failed to deliver a killer blow to the royalist cause.

After a hard reckoning and the introduction of a Self-Denying Ordinance (passed later, in April 1645) that required all peers and MPs to resign their military offices, parliament formed the New Model Army. It had a new commander-in-chief, Sir Thomas “Black Tom” Fairfax, and stricter discipline. Fairfax ensured that the men were paid centrally and regularly. Fornicators were whipped, and plunderers were shot. In its first year of campaigning, the New Model Army fought two major battles and a dozen sieges and storms.

### The final showdown

Cromwell, now lieutenant general of the cavalry, took a detachment to Basing House on 8 October 1645. Heavy bombardment produced two effective breaches in the house’s walls. On the 14th they stormed the house and took it in the better part of an hour. Whereas the garrison had been divided by religion and had lost its Protestant regiments, the New Model Army was united by an intense religious fervour. Cromwell prayed the night before the storm to the drumbeat of Psalm 115, reflecting on the lines decrying idols: “They that make them are like unto them, so is every one that trusteth them.”

Confidence stemmed, too, from numerical advantage (about 6,000 besiegers to 300 defenders), heavy artillery and the knowledge



### New rules

Sir Thomas Fairfax in a c1649–50 painting. He took charge of the New Model Army, instilling stricter discipline among the troops

## The New Model Army’s combination of numbers, guns, motivation and ruthlessness proved a winning formula

that no outside force could now save Basing House. The local royalist garrisons had fallen, and New Model discipline won local support.

The fighting was savage and about half the defenders were slain. Some Jesuit priests were executed in cold blood and one woman, the daughter of a clergyman, was killed trying to save her father. However, the attackers showed restraint in some quarters. More than 100 prisoners were taken, including 15 “Irish rebels”. The New Model Army’s combination of numbers, guns, motivation, morale and controlled ruthlessness proved a winning formula. “God exceedingly abounds in His goodness to us,” wrote Cromwell that night as a fire took hold of the house. He recommended that it be demolished, “utterly slighted” – a policy that helped ensure strongholds could not be retaken.

The news of the fall of Basing House was received in Oxford with a cry of anguish “as if they had lost their gods”. In London, the bells rang out in celebration. Babylon had fallen. It was not the end of the war, but it helps explain how it was won.

There is another reason why we should set more store upon walls than weapons. The length and intensity of a siege brings the face of war into sharp relief. Wonderful things happened at Basing House: acts of courage, creation, love, even a wedding. But it also witnessed desertions, betrayals and atrocities including a rudimentary form of chemical warfare: the parliamentarians set fire to hay bales saturated in sulphur and arsenic, and directed the fumes towards the house.

For the royalist clergyman Humfrey Peake, a siege was mental as well as physical torture. He was tormented by the “sad spectacle” of death, the “intolerable stench” of it and the “hideous shapes” of death’s soldiers mustering against him. His nerves were shredded by the “panic terrors” of others, their “shrieks and cries and noise and tumult”, and the “sad unrest” that shows people “what they are”.

Of the many ways in which men try to ruin one another, Peake concluded, “this of a siege is the sharpest and the saddest”. More than a flash of courage or cowardice on the battlefield, a siege drills deep down into the human condition and draws out the best and worst of humanity. **H**

Jessie Childs is an author, broadcaster and historian. Her new book, *The Siege of Loyalty House: A Civil War Story*, is published by Bodley Head in May

**LISTEN** Listen to Jessie discussing her new book on BBC Radio 4’s **Start the Week**, now on BBC Sounds at: [bbc.co.uk/sounds/brand/b006r9xr](http://bbc.co.uk/sounds/brand/b006r9xr)



**Riding to victory** Oliver Cromwell and the New Model Army storm Basing House in this 19th-century painting. They finally took the royalist stronghold on 14 October 1645

# The survivor, the “incurable” and the scapegoat

History is too often presented as tales of “great men” – yet the experiences of ordinary women speak eloquently about the reality of lives past. **Lucy Worsley** introduces three outwardly unremarkable people caught up in pivotal events

ILLUSTRATION BY SARAH YOUNG

Our illustration imagines the Suffolk woman Olivia Cranmer, who carved out a successful career managing the family plot of land in the wake of the Black Death



Accompanies the  
new four-part series  
**Lucy Worsley**  
**Investigates**, due to air  
on BBC Two in mid-May



## Life after the Black Death

How plague opened up new horizons for a Suffolk widow

**“W**hy should people study the Black Death?” I asked historian John Hatcher. “Because,” he laughed, “it’ll make you feel better about coronavirus.”

When the bubonic plague swept through England in 1348–49, it wiped out something like half of the population. Giovanni Boccaccio’s classic account of plague symptoms describes how first “swellings in the groin or under the armpits, some egg-shaped, others the size of an apple” would appear. Victims then “began to find dark blotches on their arms and thighs. These were signs that someone would die.”

The rich were more likely to survive, hiding away on country estates where the risk of infection was lower. Priests, however, had terrible survival rates because, as they heard the confessions of the dying, they were in the direct line of fire.

Professor Hatcher has studied the Black Death’s rampage through one particular Suffolk village, Walsham le Willows, and led me to the story of one particular woman, Olivia Cranmer, which had rather a surprising ending.

In the Suffolk Archives in Bury St Edmunds, the records of the court of Walsham le Willows survive in an astonishing state of preservation. They allow us to track the effects of the pandemic on Olivia’s family, whose name still survives in the part of the village called Cranmer Green.

The Cranmers were serfs, with the right to cultivate assigned land. In return, they had to pay their lord for all sorts of basic things, such as getting married. Though luckier than many people who had no access to land at all, the Cranmers still lived on the edge. Life in England in 1348 was precarious because the agricultural techniques available

couldn’t really support the population. And a history of hunger made a body less able to resist and survive the Black Death.

The court records of Walsham, a village of around 1,200 souls, register an astonishing 119 men dying just between the court sessions of May and June 1349. But these deaths were recorded only because the customary death duty – often a cow – would now be payable to the lord of the manor. And the court rolls don’t mention the deaths of women or children, because they were economically irrelevant.

That’s why it’s so surprising that Olivia Cranmer appears in the rolls enough times for us to track her life story. The Cranmer family were not infrequent law-breakers: they were fined for having more sheep than they were permitted to, for example. Olivia first pops up in the records when she had to pay a penalty for having an illegitimate child. When she did later marry, the absence of the usual payment due suggests that it might have been a forced marriage – a union seen to “put right” her position as an unmarried mother. Life then seems to have treated her well until 1349 when her grandfather William, her father and her two brothers died. Next, her husband, Robert, was taken.

### Shifting dynamics

The deaths of so many men all over England completely changed social dynamics. Some labourers refused to work altogether, thinking that life was too short. Others demanded higher wages. And there were women, like Olivia, who became important in an unprecedented way.

With so many of her closest relatives dead, Olivia was allowed to take over the family plot of land. Like some other widows and female plague survivors, she became a farmer and businesswoman in her own right. In later life, she even sublet her land so that she could live off a pension. The Black Death perhaps brought Olivia Cranmer a life she could never have dreamed of. Remarkably, she survived into her seventh decade as a relatively rich, independent woman.

And I like to think it’s significant that she never remarried.

With her husband,  
father and brother dead,  
Olivia became a farmer  
and businesswoman  
in her own right

➤ Turn to page 55 to read our feature  
on the evolution of the **Black Death**

## A one-way ticket to Bedlam

The “madhouse” awaited a seamstress who tried to kill the king

**T**he 18th century’s most high-profile patient with a mental illness was, of course, George III. But intertwined with his life story is that of a woman whose experiences of mental ill health show how a person’s rank dramatically changed the treatment they received as a patient in Georgian England.

There was always something a bit different about Margaret Nicholson, according to witnesses who spoke at the investigation into her actions. She couldn’t seem to hold down a job – she’d been a housemaid and a seamstress – and strange fits of laughter were heard at night ringing from the rented room in which Margaret lived alone.

Margaret believed that the king, father of his people, had a responsibility to make her rickety life better. She wrote to him no fewer than 20 times, asking for money and other help. When he failed to answer, she arrived at St James’s Palace on 2 August 1786 – and tried to kill him.

Margaret’s attempt on George’s life wasn’t particularly serious: she used a dessert knife, more useful for cutting up fruit than attacking people. And the king himself, perhaps recognising someone who was experiencing something akin to his

own episodic illnesses, called out to his guards not to hurt her.

But Margaret now presented Georgian society with a problem. She was ill, clearly, but she was also a criminal. In France she might well have been executed in a barbarous fashion, but the British prided themselves on doing things differently. Instead, she was committed to hospital.

This hospital, though, was the dreaded “Bedlam”: the Bethlehem Hospital, where patients were sometimes chained to the walls. Its authorities decided that Margaret should be placed in the wing for “incurables” – people who they considered were never going to get well. And there poor

**The authorities decided that Margaret no longer needed to be restrained with a chain, but no one was ever going to free this “dangerous” woman**

Margaret remained, year after year. She was probably treated with leeches and emetics, just as George III had been, until the royal doctors panicked and brought in physicians with slightly more up-to-date tools for treating mental illness. The king’s doctors, operating at the forefront of medical practice, began to prescribe calm, quiet and fresh air, instead of the old methods: blood-letting and violent purging.

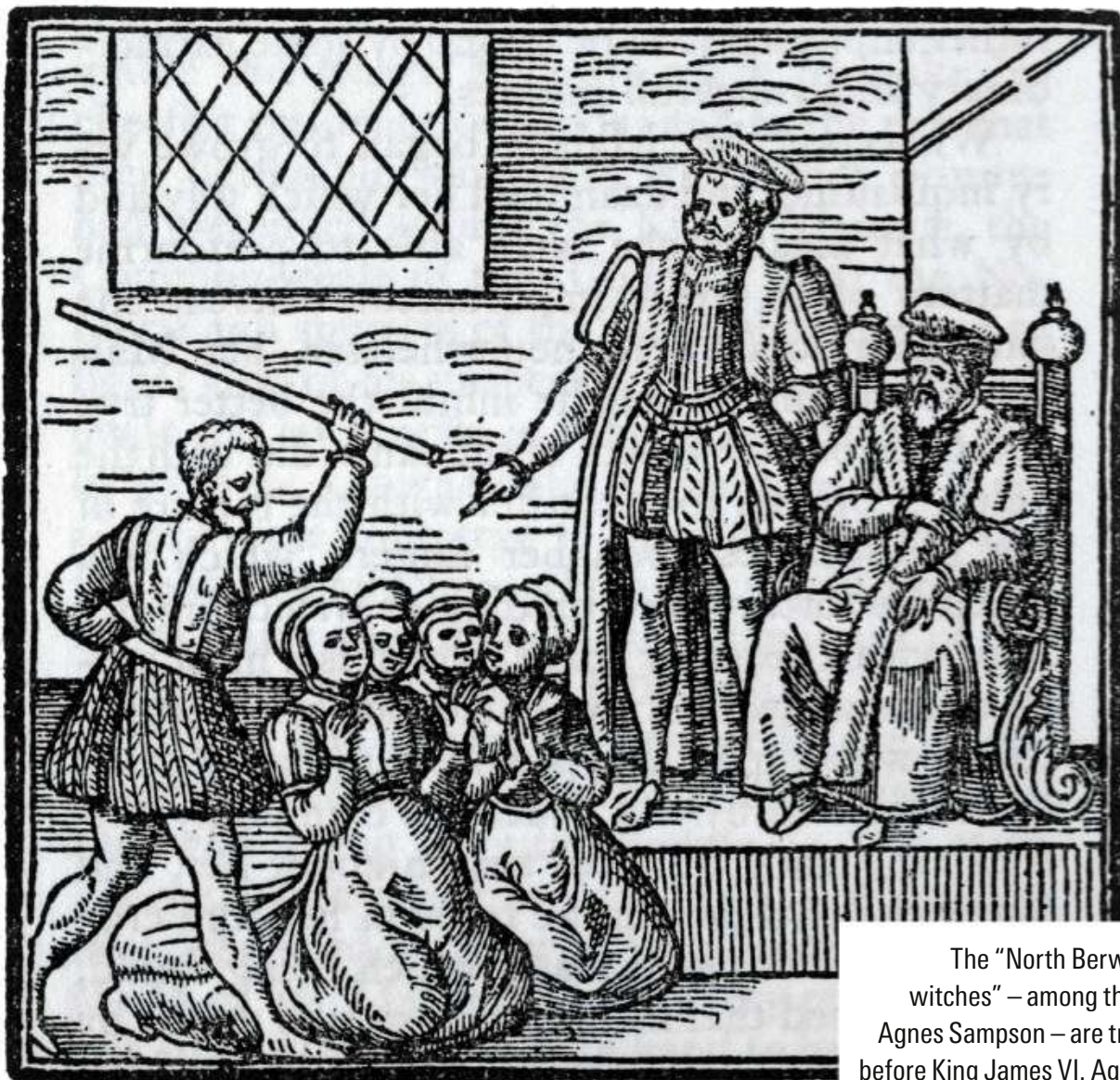
After five years, the hospital authorities decided that Margaret no longer needed to be restrained with a chain, but no one was ever going to let this “dangerous” woman go free. Partly because of the king’s illness, treatment and temporary recovery, Georgian society grew gradually more interested in what was going on its “mad-houses”, and in 1815 parliament heard about the barbaric conditions in the Bethlehem Hospital.

A new regime of reporting and inspecting was introduced, and the hospital’s record-keeping was vastly improved. These records reveal that Margaret was, by the late 1810s, a very elderly woman, quiet in her ways and in good health, albeit hard of hearing. They also tell us that she enjoyed tea, snuff and gingerbread.

Margaret died in 1828, having spent 42 years in the system. The reforms came too late to bring about any major improvement in her life, but at least these records allow us to see her for herself at last: not as a criminal or a patient, but simply as an old lady.



A contemporary illustration shows Margaret Nicholson attempting to murder King George III, a crime that saw her locked up as an “incurable”



The "North Berwick witches" – among them Agnes Sampson – are tried before King James VI. Agnes was strangled and burned for her alleged crimes

## Burning injustice

### The grim fate of a healer in the wrong job at the wrong time

In the 1590s, one midwife and "wise wife" (or healer) gained a good reputation among the patients she helped from her home in the Scottish village of Keith, East Lothian. Yet Agnes Sampson also had the terrible misfortune to be in the wrong job at the wrong time.

Scots of Agnes's generation were fearful of witchcraft, and the majority of those accused of this crime were women. Witch scares frequently erupted at times when standards of living declined, as happened in the 1590s. Thanks to a prolonged spell of poor weather and increased pressure on the land, people were going hungry – and society needed someone to blame.

"Witches" were thought to be people who'd made a terrible pact with the devil, promising to do his bidding in return for a long life. Europe's "experts" on witchcraft proclaimed in scholarly books that, though men could be seduced into witchcraft, women were particularly vulnerable to the devil's blandishments. On top of that, the religious changes of the 16th century – particularly the coming of the Reformation to Scotland – led people to take more extreme religious positions. This was true for both Protestants and Catholics, but was particularly true of King James VI of Scotland. Hoping to position himself as a good and godly heir to the Protestant throne of England, he thought his credentials would be improved by getting tough on witchcraft.

#### Remarkable discovery

It was in this climate that someone made an accusation against the local midwife in Keith, Agnes Sampson, who found herself investigated by the church. It's quite remarkable to be able to discover anything at all about a woman living a quiet rural life at this level in society. But, through records of the investigation, we learn that Agnes was a widow, that

she had children, and that she'd learned her craft as a healer from her father. We also know she had a lot of clients, both satisfied and dissatisfied, who now came forward with their opinions.

It's hard for us to understand that, even though it may sound cool today, there was simply no such thing as a "good" or "white" witch. Rather, Agnes was someone you might employ to protect you from the malign consequences of witchcraft: sickness in your family or your cattle.

In Agnes's case, the accusations mounted up, finally coming to the attention of the king himself. She was brought to his palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh to be interrogated. Those questioning her used torture, causing her "pain most grievous". Shaving all the hair off her naked body, they searched it for the "devil's mark": this involved pricking a suspect's body with a pin until a spot was found which the devil had made insensate. Agnes was stabbed all over.

The record of what Agnes said under these terrible conditions survives, but it's a tricky document. Today we understand that a person "confessing" under duress will say anything to make the pain stop, guessing at whatever it is that the questioners want to hear. So when Agnes tells us that she took part in a meeting of witches, or cooked up a storm at sea, she was probably saying more about the fantasies of her interrogators than telling anything remotely like the truth. But Agnes's "confession" made her, under the law, into a witch. Her fate was then inevitable. And on 28 January 1591, she was strangled then burned on Edinburgh's Castle Hill.

Walking on that hill today, watching the tourists enjoying themselves, it's chilling to think of the injustices carried out there on women such as Agnes Sampson. The only glimmer of good in this whole story is that, unlike so many others, in this case we know and can commemorate her name. **H**

Lucy Worsley is an author, broadcaster and chief curator at Historic Royal Palaces

#### MORE FROM US

Read Marion Gibson's article about the **witchfinders of the 16th and 17th centuries** at: [historyextra.com/period/early-modern/witchfinding](http://historyextra.com/period/early-modern/witchfinding)

#### WATCH

Lucy Worsley sheds light on famous episodes in British history in the new four-part series **Lucy Worsley Investigates**, due to air on BBC Two in mid-May



Shaving all the hair off her naked body, Agnes's accusers searched it for the "devil's mark"

# Q&A

A selection of historical **conundrums** answered by experts

## Were there female gladiators in ancient Rome?

►►► Although gladiatorial combat was predominantly a male domain, female gladiators did exist. They were mostly slaves or prisoners of war, and catered to audiences with a taste for the unusual.

The promoters of female gladiators often took inspiration from the ancient Greek myths of the Amazons – legendary single-breasted female warriors. For instance, the poet Juvenal tells us that a female gladiator called Mevia tried to emulate the fearsome fighters by hunting beasts in the ring “with spear in hand and breast exposed”.

We know there was a fear among Romans that upper-class women might

want to become gladiators. Prohibitions, including an AD 19 decree barring upper-class men and women plus their descendants from fighting in the arena, show that the activity was attempted.

According to the historian Cassius Dio, women participated in the games held to mark the opening of the Colosseum in AD 80, but none were of any prominence.

Female gladiators were banned from the arena altogether by the emperor Septimius Severus in AD 200, but even after this some may still have fought.

.....  
**Ian Goh**, senior lecturer in classics at Swansea University



Part of the Amazon frieze from the mausoleum of Halicarnassus, depicting a mythical fight between the Greeks and the Amazons. The female gladiator Mevia is said to have fought like an Amazon



Captain Charles Boycott in 1863. This land agent's behaviour caused the local community to shun him

## Where does the word “boycott” come from?

►►► Boycott was a real person. In 1879–80, at the height of the Irish Land War – a period of agrarian protest spawned by a serious drop in agricultural incomes – an English-born land agent called Captain Charles Boycott refused tenant demands for a reduction of rent on Lord Erne's County Mayo estate. Instead, he attempted to serve eviction notices against several of them.

Tenants and the wider community responded by shunning him at every opportunity: shopkeepers refused him service; his servants and farm employees deserted him; his walls and fences were destroyed; his cattle were mutilated; and his effigy was hanged and burned in a local square.

After witnessing this, it is said that the local Catholic parish priest, Fr John O'Malley, coined the term “boycott” as an alternative to “ostracise”. It was certainly widely used by O'Malley's friend, the American journalist James Redpath. In the *Daily News* of 13 December 1880 BOYCOTT was printed in large capitals. The intense international media focus meant that Boycott's name soon became a term to describe communal ostracism, not just in English but also in several other languages.

.....  
**Terence Dooley**, author of *Burning the Big House* (Yale University Press, 2022)

## DID YOU KNOW...?

### Shot in the shin

Jules Verne (pictured inset c1878), the French author of famous science-fiction books such as *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* and *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, was badly wounded by his own nephew in 1886. Gaston, son of the writer's brother, was experiencing paranoid delusions when he burst into his uncle's rooms, claiming that someone was following him. He then fired two shots at Verne with a revolver. One missed but the other unfortunately hit his uncle in the shin, causing him to limp for the rest of his life.



### Flying high

The current 50-star flag of the United States was designed by a 17-year-old as a school project. Robert Heft was given a mark of B- by his teacher, who said he would upgrade it if the schoolboy could get his design officially accepted. Because Alaska and Hawaii were made states in 1959, a new 50-star flag was required, and a competition for the design was announced. Heft entered it and won. His teacher upped his mark to an A.

### Record-breaking road trip

The first man to drive a car across the USA took 63 days, 12 hours and 30 minutes to do so. On 23 May 1903 Horatio Nelson Jackson accepted a \$50 bet that he couldn't complete the journey and, together with mechanic Sewall Crocker, set off from San Francisco in a Winton car (shown inset). They arrived in New York on 26 July, after spending more than \$8,000 on the journey. The trip today would take about 40 hours (without breaks). **H**

**Nick Rennison**, writer and journalist specialising in history



ILLUSTRATION BY @GLENMCILLUSTRATION

## Why were the Medici given a giraffe?

►►► Sent in 1487, the giraffe was a present to Lorenzo "the Magnificent" de' Medici, from the Mamluk Sultan Qaytbay. Then, as now, gift-giving was an important symbolic element of diplomacy. By sending the giraffe, the sultan also conveyed his good wishes to the family who were, by this time, de facto lords of the Florentine Republic.

Lorenzo de' Medici had come to power in 1469, just a year after Qaytbay had succeeded as ruler of the Mamluk empire, which had its capital in Cairo. Qaytbay was known both as a military leader and for his architectural patronage. Cairo was an important trading city for Florentine merchants, giving access to products from around the Indian Ocean, so the two had an interest in maintaining good diplomatic relations.

Once in Florence, the Medici giraffe was put on display and taken out on walks. But it was far from the only exotic animal to be the subject of such an exchange. The Medici had long maintained a lion house in Florence, and the Este rulers of

Ferrara also kept lions. Meanwhile, the Visconti lords of Milan had an ostrich, and King Ferrante of Naples a zebra.

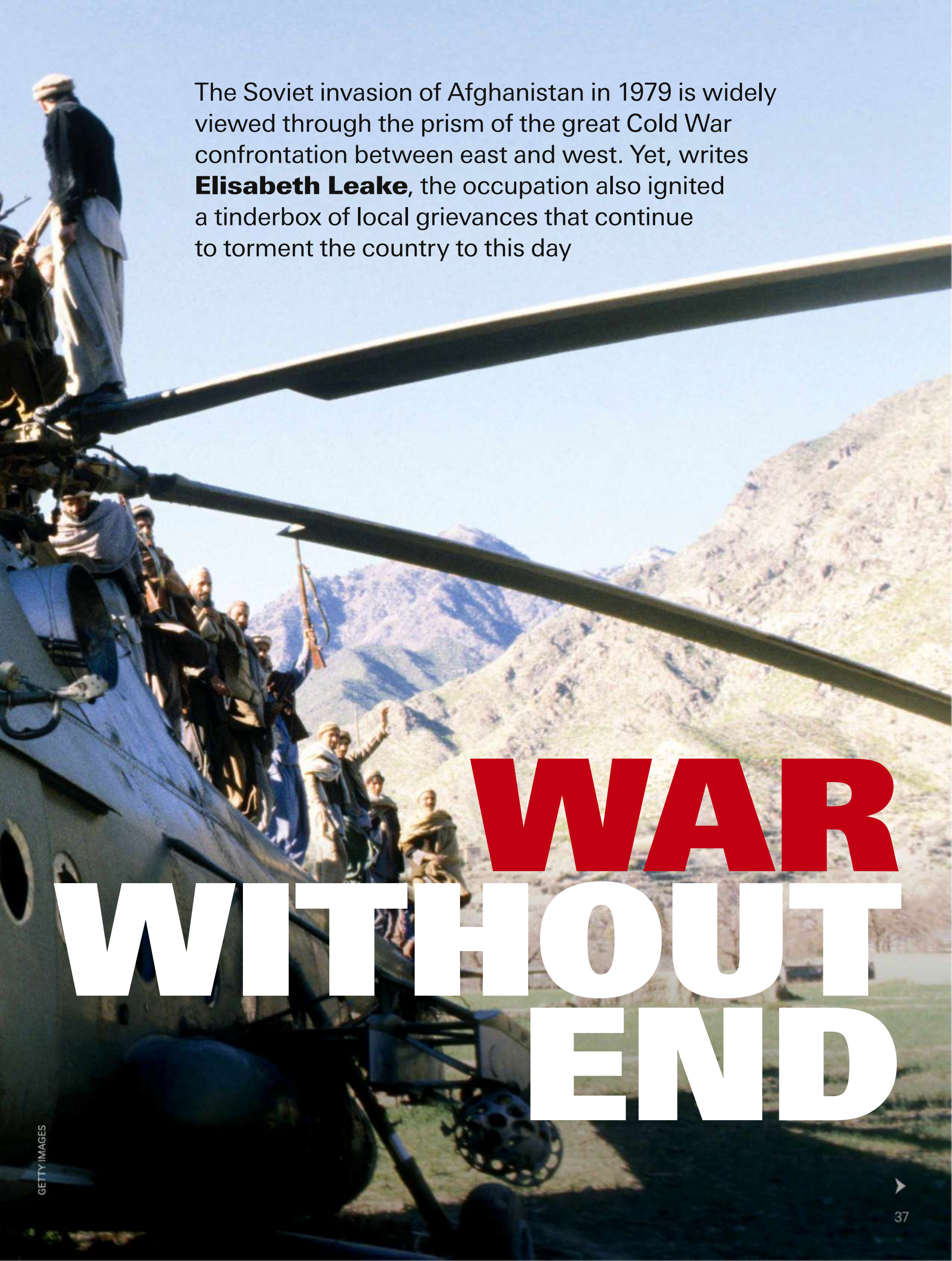
As European powers expanded their empires, exotic creatures, presented as diplomatic gifts, could act as symbols of their reach. The king of Portugal tried to pass on to Pope Leo X (Lorenzo de' Medici's son) a rhinoceros he had received from Gujarat. The attempt, however, went tragically wrong when the ship carrying the rhinoceros sank en route to Rome.

.....  
**Catherine Fletcher**, author of *The Beauty and the Terror: An Alternative History of the Italian Renaissance* (The Bodley Head, 2020)





Afghan fighters on top of a destroyed Soviet helicopter, 1980. The arrival of Soviet forces in Afghanistan the previous year had complicated an already volatile situation

A photograph of a military helicopter, likely a Chinook, in a mountainous region. Several people are visible on the helicopter's structure, some holding rifles. The background shows rugged, arid mountains under a clear blue sky. The text is overlaid on the upper left portion of the image.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 is widely viewed through the prism of the great Cold War confrontation between east and west. Yet, writes **Elisabeth Leake**, the occupation also ignited a tinderbox of local grievances that continue to torment the country to this day

# WAR WITHOUT END



### FACTIONAL FIGHTING

Mujahideen rebels in Afghanistan, 1978. The nation's febrile politics sparked repeated episodes of civil war and infighting during the 1970s and 1980s

**Within days,  
50,000 Soviet  
troops were  
in Afghanistan,  
where they  
would remain for  
almost a decade**

**O**n 3 August 1978, the central council of the Islamic Society of Afghanistan (Jamiati-Islami) wrote an impassioned plea to Kurt Waldheim, secretary-general of the United Nations. In their letter, they decried Afghanistan's political leaders, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), as a "power-thirsty gang" intent on destroying Afghanistan's political and social fabric and lacking any respect for humanitarian norms or human rights. The Council demanded UN intercession, warning that "the continued survival of this group will endanger the peace of this region of the world".

This warning soon came true. On 24 December 1979, the Soviet Politburo issued a public directive justifying the deployment of Soviet troops into Afghanistan to support their allies, the same PDPA. The Soviets, the Politburo claimed, sought "to give international aid to the friendly Afghan people" and to prevent "anti-Afghan actions from neighbouring countries". Within days, 50,000 Soviet troops were on the ground in Afghanistan. They would remain there for almost a decade as part of Soviet efforts to keep their local allies in power.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was one of the moments that defined the 1980s. It took place against the backdrop of the global Cold War, in which the Soviet Union and the United States (as well as China) vied for supremacy. Indeed, so international was the Cold War during the 1970s and early

1980s that, while US and Soviet leaders pursued talks on limiting strategic arms and the balance of power in Europe, Soviet forces backed independence movements in southern and eastern Africa as American troops withdrew from Vietnam.

While Vietnam remains the most enduringly remembered of the Cold War's "hot wars", the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had equally explosive consequences – not just for the Cold War superpowers, but for regional relations in south and central Asia, and Afghanistan itself. It signalled the end of détente and a resurgence in Cold War tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union. It also led to an international outcry, including public condemnation in the UN General Assembly. In 1980, US president Jimmy Carter called for economic sanctions and a boycott of that year's Moscow Olympics, declaring, in his State of the Union address, that "the Soviet Union must pay a concrete price for their aggression".

### Existing tensions

Yet this common narrative of Afghanistan in the 1980s – one of Cold War competition and intervention by the so-called "great powers" – tells only a partial story. In this regard, the Islamic Society of Afghanistan's UN petition sheds far greater light on how and why a war would break out that would engulf not just Afghanistan and Afghans, but also regional and international powers alike. Soviet invading forces encountered a nation already embroiled in civil war – one which would go on to outlast the 1980s, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War itself.

Violence had broken out more than a year earlier in the aftermath of the coup that brought the People's

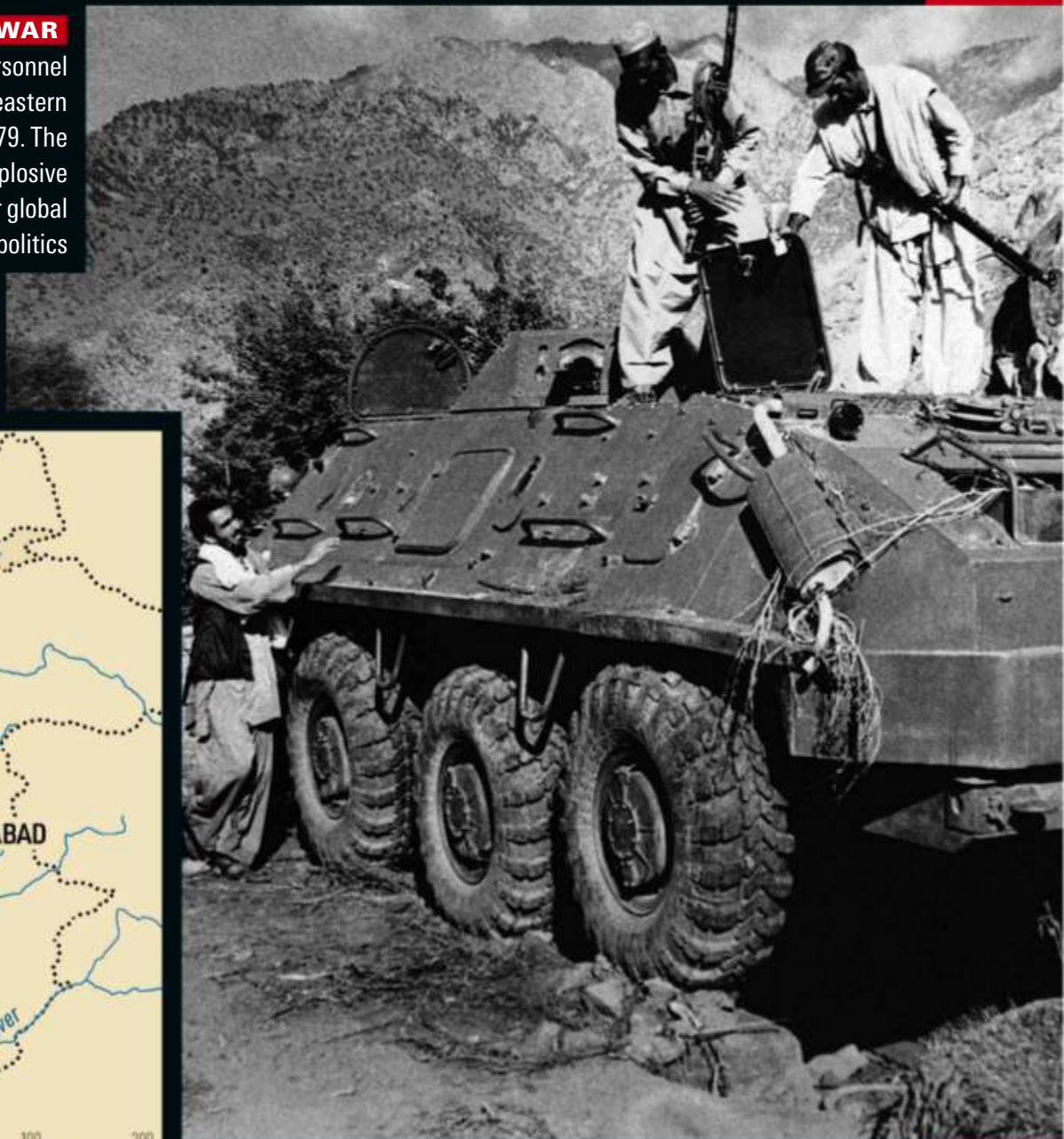


#### POLITICAL VIOLENCE

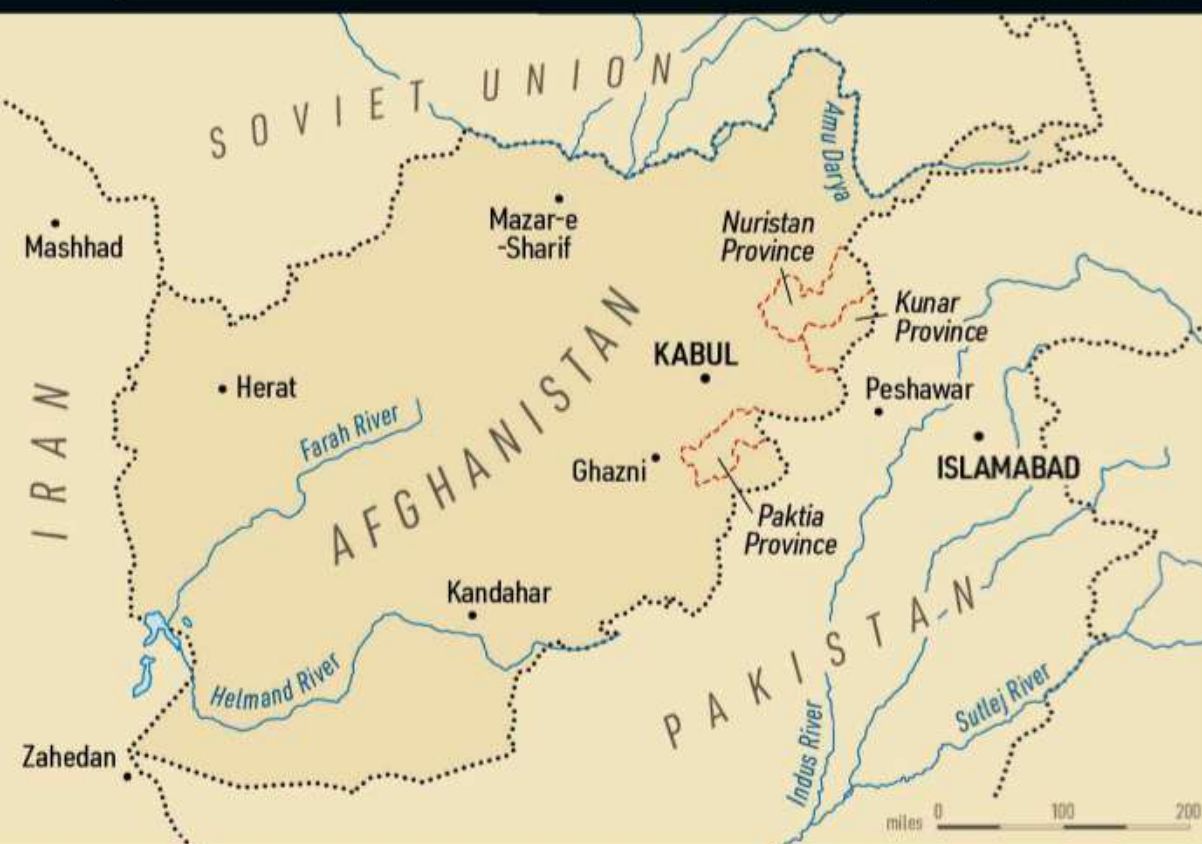
Members of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan at a rally in 1978. By the autumn of that year, the group's use of force to achieve its political aims had sparked resistance throughout the country

#### PRIZE OF WAR

A captured Soviet armoured personnel carrier is inspected in eastern Afghanistan, December 1979. The Soviet invasion had explosive consequences both for global and regional politics



#### BATTLE LINES Afghanistan and its neighbours, 1979



MAP BY PAUL HEWITT - BATTLEFIELD DESIGN

## TIMELINE AFGHANISTAN'S AGONY

**January 1965**

The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan forms in the nation's capital, Kabul, against a backdrop of constitutional reform. Groups such as the Islamic Society of Afghanistan also begin organising.

**17 July 1973**

The king's cousin, **Mohammad Daoud Khan** (pictured below), launches a **coup d'état**, establishing the Republic of Afghanistan.



**27 April 1978**

The PDPA launches a **coup**, killing Daoud and his family, and announces the creation of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. The PDPA and the **Soviet Union** sign a **treaty of friendship** in December.

Crowds gather to see official images of Afghanistan's new rulers, May 1978

**15–20 March 1979**

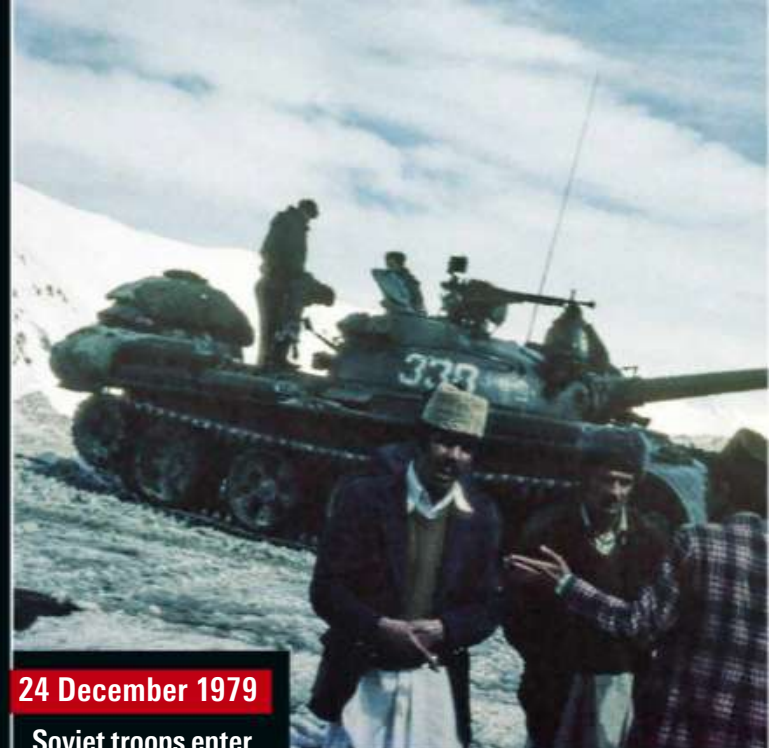
A popular uprising against the PDPA takes place in Herat. The PDPA forcibly retakes the city, resulting in between 5,000 and 25,000 civilian deaths.

**3 July 1979**

US president Jimmy Carter **authorises limited financial support for Afghan resistance groups**, working alongside Pakistan.

**24 December 1979**

**Soviet troops enter Afghanistan**, with the Politburo citing the December 1978 treaty of friendship.



**14 January 1980**

The UN General Assembly resoundingly passes a resolution demanding the **immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops**.

**11 March 1985**

**Mikhail Gorbachev** (pictured below) comes to power in the Soviet Union. He begins looking for ways to ensure a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.



Democratic Party of Afghanistan to power in April 1978. The PDPA had formed in the mid-1960s during Afghanistan's era of constitutional reform. While it outwardly pledged to pursue Afghan democratisation, in internal documents the party declared its allegiance to Marxism. Upon splitting into two factions, known as "Khalq" and "Parcham", in 1973 the latter backed former prime minister Mohammad Daoud Khan in overthrowing his cousin, King Mohammed Zahir Shah, and seizing power. After being sidelined under Daoud, however, the two factions reunited and launched an unexpected attack on the government in 1978, which culminated in Daoud's assassination – and gave the PDPA an opportunity to govern.

The PDPA pledged itself to a socialist Afghanistan, likening its "Saur Revolution" to Russia's 1917 October

Revolution. But the new government's heavy-handed attempts at political, economic and social reform, alongside its willingness to employ violence to enforce its writ, led to local resentment. By the autumn of 1978, resistance had erupted across Afghanistan's provinces, ranging from Nuristan to Kandahar and from Paktia to Kunar. It only spread from there. By the time Soviet troops invaded, three-quarters of the country was in a state of rebellion.

As fighting expanded across the country, a political exodus took place.

Individuals and groups labelled enemies of the state by the PDPA sought shelter abroad. A number of political figures settled in and around the city of Peshawar in Pakistan, joining an older coterie of Afghan intellectuals and activists who had fled persecution in earlier times. While living abroad, these groups sought to mobilise Afghans inside and outside the country against the PDPA. They took a leading role in encouraging and supporting an armed resistance, and some groups went even further, seeking to reshape Afghan politics and society.

One of the older groups already active around Peshawar was the Islamic Society of Afghanistan. Originally formed at Kabul University in the mid-1960s, its leaders had fled to Pakistan in the early 1970s after coming into conflict with Afghanistan's then-president: Mohammad Daoud Khan. From exile in 1978, the society's leaders had written to the UN to protest the PDPA's coup and activities. But letter-writing was not the organisation's sole activity. It soon began encouraging armed resistance against the regime, drawing on social and political networks stretching across Afghanistan and Pakistan to deploy men and arms against the PDPA and their Soviet backers. Its members also travelled abroad, across the Middle East and Europe and to the United States, to lobby foreign states for aid. It published pamphlets to ensure that the world saw the tragedy that was unfolding in Afghanistan, and to promote its own political alternatives. The Islamic Society envisioned a post-conflict Afghanistan in which

**The war created an opportunity for different Afghan interest groups to make a play for their visions of Afghanistan**

A Soviet tank in Afghanistan's Hindu Kush mountains in January 1980, shortly after the invasion



1990

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates there are at least **6.3 million Afghan refugees worldwide**.



People flee fighting in the city of Jalalabad, 1989. Millions were displaced by the conflict



Taliban soldiers during their attack on Kabul, 1996

27 September 1996

The Taliban seizes Kabul, effectively becoming Afghanistan's rulers. Resistance continues in north-eastern Afghanistan, headed by the Northern Alliance.

December 2001

Three months after the 9/11 attacks, the Northern Alliance – with backing from the US and its allies – **topples the Taliban from power**.

February 2020

The United States and the Taliban sign the Doha Agreement, in which the US agrees to withdraw its troops before the May of the following year.



Civilians are evacuated from Kabul's airport on 24 August 2021, nine days after the city was captured by Taliban forces

May 2021

The Taliban launches an offensive against Afghan government forces. It goes on to take Kabul that August.

14 April 1988

UN-negotiated **Geneva Accords** are signed, paving the way for the withdrawal of Soviet troops.

15 February 1989

The final Soviet forces withdraw from Afghanistan. Fighting nevertheless continues, and the United States and Soviet Union continue to provide financial support to combatants.

29 April 1992

A new interim government assumes authority in Afghanistan, uniting a coalition of resistance groups. However, infighting continues, preventing the government from being effective.

Islam infused modern politics. It was a vision just as radical as the PDPA's.

## Clash of ideologies

The activities of the Islamic Society of Afghanistan, taken alongside those of the PDPA, point to a war that initially had little to do with the Cold War. The conflict that began in Afghanistan in mid-1978 was fundamentally political. It was between competing visions of Afghan politics and society, and of how Afghanistan should be governed, put forward not just by the PDPA and the Islamic Society but also by a variety of other groups. Socialism, Maoism, Islamism, parliamentarianism, monarchism and ethno-federalism were just a few of the alternative systems touted as the PDPA's coup, its failures of governance, and the subsequent outbreak of conflict created an opportunity for different Afghan interest groups to make a play for their visions of Afghanistan to rise to the fore.

Yet regional and Cold War politics fundamentally complicated the conflict, ensuring that none of these Afghan visions ultimately came to pass. Even before the Soviets invaded, they had been involved in Afghanistan. The PDPA's leaders had immediately sought Soviet support and recognition, despite ignoring Soviet suggestions to moderate their policies and seek local allies. The scale of Soviet activities changed after December 1979, but shoring up the Afghan state remained a priority – alongside eliminating any armed resistance. This latter effort largely failed, as the Soviet presence neither in-

creased local support for the PDPA nor succeeded in rooting out insurgents.

From the United States, the Carter administration began providing limited amounts of covert aid in 1979, partially fuelled by concerns of further Soviet spread south-west at a time when Iran was in the throes of revolution and Pakistan's military dictator, Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq, had just executed the nation's former civilian leader, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The initial amount of aid provided was not enough to create a "Soviet Vietnam", as Carter's National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, later claimed it could. But this early US support did help establish an aid pipeline that would balloon in the aftermath of the Soviet invasion, as part of subsequent president Ronald Reagan's determination to roll back Soviet influence.

Another consequence of this covert aid from the United States was to help further militarise the conflict, although American administrators were indiscriminate about which resistance groups received support. In US Cold War calculations, the ability of Afghan resistance groups to produce a military stalemate against superior Soviet firepower mattered far more than local debates about Afghan politics and society.

Regional partners took further advantage of Cold War politics. As an ally of the US, and host to many of the Afghan resistance groups in exile, Pakistan was exceptionally placed to

US president Jimmy Carter pictured during the January 1980 speech in which he called for a boycott of that year's Olympics in Moscow





## MISSION ACCOMPLISHED?

Soviet forces wave to crowds in Kabul as they leave Afghanistan, May 1988. The country's civil war continued long after the withdrawal



## CONTINUING CONFLICT

Fighting in Afghanistan's streets, 1992. A new interim government, established that year, proved ineffective against factional power dynamics

manipulate the conflict for its own ends. Not only did its Inter-Services Intelligence take responsibility for distributing foreign aid to Afghan resistance fighters, but the nation's military dictator, General Zia, used this position of influence to shape local and regional politics. He chose to provide particularly strong support to Afghan resistance groups that shared his own interests in the Islamisation of politics, including the Islamic Society and the Islamic Party of Afghanistan (Hizb-i-Islami). This, in turn, narrowed the windows of opportunities for other reform-minded Afghan groups, which received less financial and military aid.

The fact that Zia's government could wield such influence was due in part to a second Afghan exodus. The PDPA coup and subsequent Soviet invasion was accompanied by one of the 20th century's largest refugee crises, as Afghan people fled the spread of the conflict. Some migrated within Afghanistan, while others went abroad. Millions settled in Pakistan and Iran, while

tens of thousands more travelled to India, western Europe, and North America. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that almost half of Afghanistan's population was forced on the move due to the war, sparking an international humanitarian crisis. As one Afghan refugee in Iran wrote to the UNHCR, seeking to reunite with family in Germany, "the tyrannical and cruel regime of Afghanistan has limited our peaceful life".

As host to several million Afghan refugees, Pakistan worked with international partners, including the UNHCR and other

UN agencies, to house and support this population. But in seeking to ease the administrative burden of managing the refugees, Pakistani officials turned to the same Afghan resistance groups that had been armed and funded to fight the Soviets. Groups including the Islamic Society and Islamic Party became intermediaries between Afghan refugees on one hand, and camp and government administrators on the other. They often demanded party membership in return for access to humanitarian aid, giving them outsized influence among many Afghan exiles.

## A cycle of violence

At least five different conflicts thus fit under the guise of the "Soviet invasion of Afghanistan". They include the war over Afghan politics, the global Cold War, and the regional competition for influence over Afghanistan and within south Asia. But they also include the humanitarian struggle over the rights of Afghan civilians and their ability to return home, and the debates in the international community as United Nations members discussed the legality of the Soviet invasion and gave the organisation the mandate to facilitate a negotiated Soviet withdrawal.

The intersections between these conflicts simultaneously expanded and constricted the nature of the war in the 1980s. They created new opportunities for some groups inside and outside Afghanistan but also limited the conflict's outcomes, as well as the nation's political possibilities and place in international politics. Islamist groups came into the spotlight, and for the first time vied seriously to rule a post-conflict Afghanistan.

Their own activities – supporting an armed resistance, interceding for refugees, and lobbying the international community – coalesced with PDPA reforms, which were

**The coup and subsequent invasion were accompanied by one of the 20th century's largest refugee crises**



#### THE COST OF WAR

A young refugee in the city of Fayzabad, north-east Afghanistan, 1990. The ongoing civil war has had a profound effect on the nation's civilian population

initially very hostile to Islam. They also benefited from Pakistani favouritism, giving such groups exceptional influence. Increasingly, in the realm of Afghan politics, debates about Afghanistan's future involved discussions about Islam's political, rather than just personal or religious, role.

But such debates did not necessarily reverberate outside of the country. Most notably, the UN-led discussions that ultimately resulted in the Soviet withdrawal of troops by February 1989 involved representatives of only four participants: the US, the Soviet Union, Pakistan, and the PDPA. Despite the key role that resistance groups had played in stalling the Soviets and undermining the stability of the PDPA-led state, and the stated sympathies of the international community, members of such groups were excluded. There was little discussion about what a post-conflict Afghanistan should look like, how this might be achieved, or how civil war combatants might reconcile their differences.

Consequently, UN negotiations only resulted in the withdrawal of Soviet troops. The civil war continued long after the Cold War superpowers lost interest. Fighting between local interest groups persisted in Afghanistan, despite several attempts at creating political coalitions.

Afghan civilians and infrastructures continued to bear the brunt of that war. Many refugees were unable to return home, even as international aid began to slow down. Several towns and villages had been so damaged by more than a decade of conflict that they could hardly sustain local livelihoods, while black markets and corruption ran rampant. These developments created the opportunities for the fundamentalist Taliban movement to come to power, taking advantage of the destruction and ongoing

infighting. And even then, the violence did not stop.

What has emerged is a war that is now entering its fifth decade. Many of the dynamics that have developed in Afghanistan in the 21st century can only be understood by looking at this longer history of conflict in the region.

But even this perspective is narrow. It focuses all too often on Afghanistan as a site of warfare or intervention, and therefore fails to recognise the alternative forms of politics and society imagined and sought by many Afghan people themselves. The Islamic Society of Afghanistan's letter to the UN reveals an organisation that sought real political and social change and adopted a universally recognised language of rights and world peace. It was not just an insurgent group fighting to push back invading forces: it aimed to create an Afghanistan that adopted tenets of political Islam while engaging with international society. Indeed, it continued to fight in the ongoing civil war, and joined a coalition government in 1992. It was part of the Northern Alliance that continued to combat the Taliban after it came to power, and its members took part in further governing coalitions after 2001. But its earlier political visions never came to pass.

The war, then, must be seen not just through the prism of Cold War alliances or of a desire by all Afghan people to return to existing norms. For some Afghans, it was an effort to create something new. Only by recognising such aspirations – as well as the ways in which they failed to materialise – do the real ramifications of the Soviet invasion become clear. **H**

.....  
**Elisabeth Leake** is associate professor of international history at the University of Leeds. Her latest book, *Afghan Crucible: The Soviet Invasion and the Making of Modern Afghanistan*, was published by Oxford University Press in April

#### LISTEN

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was covered in an episode of **The History Hour** on the BBC World Service. Listen here: [bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w3csypzq](http://bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/w3csypzq)



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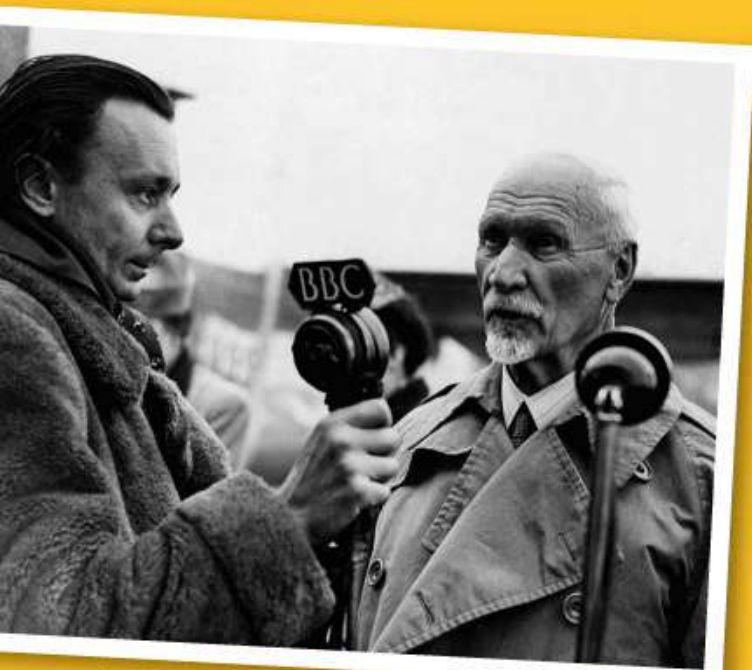


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# A cultural institution



## Global voices

Jan Smuts, prime minister of the Union of South Africa, talks to journalists in London in April 1946. That September, Smuts was among the contributors to the launch day of the BBC's new Third Programme

// The Third Programme's first head put it bluntly: there would, he warned, be few props. Listeners would need to 'make an effort' //

George Barnes, the first controller of the new Third Programme, pictured in 1946. The service, Barnes cautioned, was not for everyone



Mixing music with drama and the ancient with the cutting-edge, the BBC's Third Programme set out to scale the shining peaks of "high culture". But, says **DAVID HENDY**, its lofty aims alienated as much as they allured



**A**t 6pm on 29 September 1946, when the Third Programme took to the air for the first time, it seemed as if the BBC was dramatically abandoning one of its core "Reithian" principles. The corporation's "founding father", John Reith, had always insisted that the broadcaster's purpose had been to make "all that is best" available to "the greatest number". Yet here was the Third, apparently threatening to ring-fence high culture for a minority.

Reith, already long departed from the role of director general, harrumphed from the sidelines. True, the very first item in that first Sunday's schedule was accessible enough. *How to Listen* was a "satirical review" that took the opportunity to poke gentle fun at the Third Programme's grand pretensions before anyone else did. The rest of the night's output proved a little more demanding, however. There was Bach's *Goldberg Variations*, played – rather unusually for the time – on the harpsichord, followed by "Reflections on World Affairs" from the South African prime minister Jan Smuts. Later there were madrigals by Monteverdi conducted by Nadia Boulanger, a live concert featuring works by Hubert Parry and Vaughan Williams, and a specially commissioned Festival Overture from Benjamin Britten.

As for the following days, publicity promised new music from the composer Michael Tippett, contemporary poetry in its original French, talks on James Joyce and atomic energy, Sartre uncensored, nearly four hours of Bernard Shaw, plus the ancient Greek playwright Aeschylus's *Agamemnon*. Officially, the BBC described this extraordinarily ambitious new service as something for "the alert and receptive" listener. The Third's first head, George Barnes, put it rather more bluntly: there would, he warned, be few props.

Listeners would need to "make an effort".

Few inside the corporation were under any illusions as to the scale of the challenge they had set themselves – or how pretentious it might all appear. For, as one senior figure put it, the British people had long demonstrated a widely held prejudice "against people being too clever". Yet in his famous wartime plan for a welfare state, William Beveridge had included ignorance – alongside want, disease, squalor and idleness – as one of the giants to be slayed. The postwar Labour government subsequently embraced the idea that culture and learning were vital ingredients of the "New Jerusalem" it aimed to build – a view that clearly resonated with the BBC's own deeply rooted ambition to spread the Victorian poet Matthew Arnold's famous "sweetness and light" throughout the land.

The BBC had other, more strategic considerations to face in the years after 1945. The two wartime radio services, the Home and the Forces, had been wide-ranging and popular. But director general William Haley worried that letting the forces' easy-listening tradition continue in the form of the Light Programme without creating another service for what insiders called "the really intelligent section of the public" would unbalance the BBC's overall peacetime output. Haley was keen, too, to build on the corporation's reputation abroad, which was at an all-time high due to its extraordinary successes broadcasting vital information to occupied Europe.

## New interpretations

When the Third Programme was finally unveiled, Haley saw it as potentially the greatest civilising influence in the postwar world. There would be no need to chase ratings, no fixed points in the schedule. Talks, concerts and plays would all get whatever time they deserved. And after years of relative isolation, there would be a special attempt to reconnect Britain with the best of world culture. The critics salivated.



**Musical range** Composer and conductor Igor Stravinsky rehearses with the BBC Symphony Orchestra, 1958. The Third Programme aired a diverse array of performances

Rationing might still be a dreary reality on the high street, *The Listener* proclaimed, but on the nation's airwaves there would be a leap "from frugality to plenty".

Over the next few years, there were certainly some startlingly original treats for committed listeners. Virgil's *Aeneid* might have been a good 2,000 years old, but for its 1951 production the Third commissioned the University of Oxford's professor of poetry, Cecil Day Lewis, to come up with a fresh translation. Its producers sensed that, in the years of reconstruction after the Second World War, the story of a refugee from war sailing across the perilous Mediterranean to reach the shores of Italy – a tale that had shaped so powerfully the myth of Rome's foundation as a civilisation – was especially resonant. The adaptation, designed very much to be spoken rather than read, was vast in scale. By the end of its three-month run, it was loudly praised by the critics for bringing Virgil "from the stuffy shades of the classroom into blazing sunshine".

Occasionally, the Third earned a mention not just in the critics' columns but in the news headlines – as, for instance, when the solution to one of the great archaeological riddles of the 20th century was announced live on air. At the turn of the century, while excavating the ruins of a palace at Knossos in

Crete, the archaeologist Arthur Evans had unearthed clay tablets that were more than 3,000 years old, many of which had scratched into them a mysterious script – Linear B. Despite the best efforts of several generations of scholars, the tablets had remained unreadable – leaving the language behind them, and the whole Minoan civilisation that they represented, unknowable. But, one evening in 1952, a Third Programme producer, Prue Smith, happened to have been visiting the Highgate home of Michael Ventris, a young British architect with a precocious interest in ancient scripts. Ventris, it transpired, had been trying to decipher the Knossos tablets for years. Now, when he came late to the dinner table, he was profusely apologetic. "I'm terribly sorry to have kept you waiting," he said, "but I've done it." Smith and Ventris agreed between themselves that he would announce his momentous discovery not in an obscure journal or to the national press, but on the radio. When he took to the microphone on Tuesday 1 July, Ventris changed our view of Aegean history at a stroke. He also put a seal on the Third's reputation

for allowing its listeners to be the first to hear new ideas as they entered the public realm.

### Quality or quantity

Music did not yet dominate the Third's schedule. Yet there were plenty of ear-catching moments that established it as a platform not just for airing the existing canon but for changing what counted as part of the canon to begin with: startling new work from Peter Maxwell-Davies and Benjamin Britten; modern jazz; rediscoveries from the lost early music of the Renaissance; deliberately provocative programming that placed Bach cheek by jowl with Stravinsky. There was even, in 1960, the very first performance of Mahler's 10th Symphony. It had been left uncompleted at the time of the composer's death in 1911,

but the BBC producer Deryck

Cooke went back to the original score and did enough "conjectural filling in" to build the foundations of a version still widely used today.

Such riches did not guarantee big audiences. Haley had calculated that, in what he viewed as his "pyramid" of three radio services, the Third,



One of the ancient tablets featuring the Linear B script. Architect Michael Ventris revealed his translation of their text live on the Third Programme

occupying the glittering summit, would attract perhaps 1 in 10 of all listeners. He hoped, too, that through the BBC's efforts to nurture public taste, this figure would grow over time. Alas, it did not take long to discover that as few as 1 in 100 people were listening. The *Daily Mirror* soon reported mischievously that some inside the BBC were referring to the new service as "Haley's Third Symphony, for orchestra and two listeners".

Some compromises to the Third's rigorous schedule proved necessary. In 1951, a season of "Light Orchestral Concerts" was unveiled; six years later, big slices of airtime were taken away to make room for "Network Three", a potpourri of hobby programmes, many of them instantly forgettable. Such measures provoked high-profile campaigns by Britain's cultural elite. Michael Tippett, Vaughan Williams and TS Eliot helped launch the "Sound Broadcasting Defence Society", and in a typically eloquent talk, EM Forster reminded the BBC that the Third's mission was to chase quality, not quantity.

But the reality was that the BBC's services always had a delicate line to tread: to be ahead of public taste, but never so far ahead that people would not follow. The Third was no exception to this rule. Yet it remained sufficiently distinctive in its commitment to high culture that in the 1950s it inspired overseas broadcasters, such as RAI in Italy, to launch radio services on a strikingly similar model. As William Haley had always hoped, it was, it seemed, becoming "the envy of the world". **B**

David Henty is emeritus professor at the University of Sussex. His latest book is *The BBC: A People's History* (Profile, 2022)

**VISIT** Explore online exhibitions that showcase different aspects of the BBC's history at [bbc.co.uk/100](http://bbc.co.uk/100)



Michael Tippett and Vaughan Williams (second and third from left) in 1958. The composers played key roles in a campaign to preserve the Third Programme



**Welsh wonder** Dylan Thomas during a BBC broadcast in 1948. The writer made a series of radio recordings in the 1940s, and was rehearsing a new drama at the time of his death

## IN FOCUS How Under Milk Wood realised the Third Programme's potential

At 7.25pm on 25 January 1954, the Third Programme aired 90 minutes of radio that would go down in history as one of broadcasting's creative pinnacles, its opening words destined to be among the most famous lines in British poetry:

*To begin at the beginning: it is spring, moonless night in the small town, starless and bible-black, the cobble-streets silent and the hunched, courters' and-rabbits' wood limping invisible down to the sloeblack, slow, black, crow-black, fishingboat-bobbing sea.*

*Under Milk Wood* went on to treat listeners to a bawdy journey through the night-time dreams and working days of Organ Morgan, Polly Garter, Captain Cat and a multitudinous cast of other characters in the small fictional Welsh village of Llareggub.

Its author was the Welsh poet Dylan Thomas, who was also due to have been the drama's narrator but died before what he called his "wretched script" was ready. That *Under Milk Wood* got on the

air at all was largely down to the BBC's infinitely patient producer, Douglas Cleverdon, who'd spent half a decade cajoling a script out of Thomas. It was Cleverdon who persuaded the author to abandon an early, over-elaborate story-line, when it looked as if Thomas was wearing himself to a thread over the commission. It was also Cleverdon's inspired last-minute decision to cast the film actor Richard Burton as replacement narrator after Thomas's untimely death.

Not every critic was impressed by *Under Milk Wood*. Kingsley Amis, for one, regarded Thomas's work as "sentimentalising, ignorant horsepiss". Most reviewers, however, were thoroughly spellbound by the rhythm and texture of the lines, delivered with gusto by the production's all-Welsh cast. And between them Thomas and Cleverdon had delivered on one of the Third Programme's key promises: that as well as sharing with listeners the established highlights of "high culture", here was a radio service that would be creating brand new art all of its own.

**// The 90 minutes of radio would go down in history as one of broadcasting's creative pinnacles //**



# Retirement done **right**

Moving to a retirement village is a big decision, but the award-winning Inspired Villages makes it an easy one

**T**he last two years certainly haven't been easy, though they have helped us to do one thing: re-evaluate what's important to us. If you're over 65, this may mean finally making the move to a retirement community such as the wonderful Inspired Villages.

"Retirement can be a time of great freedom, particularly if you live in a retirement village," says James Cobb, Director of the retirement village operator and developer. "Not only are you free from the responsibilities of young children and work, but if you 'right size' to one of our villages, you're no longer burdened with worries about maintaining a large home or security." And with purchase, rent and shared ownership options available, you can be sure the life you aspire to is very much within easy reach.

## A touch of luxury

Inspired Villages certainly delivers when it comes to creating a dream lifestyle for residents. It currently operates six retirement villages in picturesque locations spanning the whole of England, from Devon up to Cheshire, with two more due to open this year – Ledian Gardens in Kent and Elderswell in Bedfordshire. Each village has stylish, discreetly age-appropriate apartments and cottages, beautifully landscaped gardens and state-of-the-art facilities, including gyms, swimming pools, restaurants, libraries, cinemas and spas.

Durrants Village in West Sussex has a lake, for instance, while Great Alne Park in Warwickshire has a grass amphitheatre that's used for concerts, talks and plays, and several villages have wildflower meadows and allotments for residents to enjoy. The Inspired teams also organise numerous events and activities throughout the year.

"I feel healthier since moving to Austin Heath," says resident Dorothy, who has taken full advantage of the facilities and classes on offer. Not only does she use the gym twice a week, but she also attends seated exercise classes and is learning to swim. "Compared to two months ago, my children can't believe I'm the same Dorothy!"



## HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR RETIREMENT

Your later years can, and should be, the best of your life, and living in an Inspired Villages retirement community allows you to make the most of this stage. Here are just some of the benefits its residents enjoy:

- Freedom from property and garden maintenance – the team will do all that for you
- The security to just lock up and leave – the village team can keep an eye on your property when you travel
- Meet new friends and enjoy fun hobbies – there are always plenty of activities going on at the vibrant villages, from knitting to paddle-boarding
- Enjoy healthy, independent living for longer – the first-rate leisure facilities and wellbeing navigators will help you reach and maintain your fitness goals
- Peace of mind for you and your family – the friendly Inspired team is always around to help, if needed

Ready to start planning your future? For more information, call **0800 138 0235** or visit **[inspiredvillages.co.uk](https://inspiredvillages.co.uk)**

**Inspired  
Villages**  
The *best* years of your life?



**Long reigned over us**

FROM LEFT: Queen Victoria during her golden jubilee celebrations, 1887. Despite the smile, she was initially reluctant to mark the occasion; A c1810 illustration of George III's golden jubilee, showing the king receiving a cornucopia of gifts; The record-breaking Queen Elizabeth II in March 2022

**“No one ever has met  
with such an ovation”**



George III pardoned PoWs, Victoria dressed down, and George V brought London to a standstill. As Elizabeth II marks 70 years on the throne, **Tracy Borman** tells the story of three previous monarchs' jubilee celebrations

BRIDGEMAN/GETTY IMAGES

**T**his year Elizabeth II marks her platinum jubilee – the first time any monarch has completed 70 years on the throne in the history of the British crown. A raft of celebrations is planned across the UK, the Commonwealth and around the world: from street parties to a star-studded concert at Buckingham Palace, a new jubilee garden (“Superbloom”) in the Tower of London moat, and even a platinum pudding competition.

While the scale of the celebrations is likely to eclipse any other in the history of the British monarchy, Elizabeth II is by no means the first sovereign whose jubilee has inspired their subjects to pull out all the stops. The history of official jubilee celebrations only goes back as far as George III (reigned 1760–1820). But the origin of jubilees can be traced to the Bible – the Old Testament uses the term to describe the marking of a 50-year milestone. Since then, the naming of these celebrations has followed the traditions of wedding anniversaries: 25 years is called a silver jubilee, 50 years a golden jubilee, 60 years a diamond jubilee, and 70 years a platinum jubilee.

Only three other British monarchs before George III achieved a golden jubilee: Henry III (r1216–72), Edward III (r1327–77) and James VI & I (reigned in Scotland 1567–1625, and England 1603–25). Although little is known about how they celebrated, the records hint at some similarities to the present day. Edward III was the earliest English ruler to mark his golden jubilee publicly. This began with a procession from the Tower of London accompanied by trumpeters, followed by a spectacular week-long joust at Smithfield.

Most monarchs might not have notched up a half century on the throne, but nearly all marked the anniversary of their accession each year – notably Elizabeth I, who held accession day tilts, theatre, poetry and costume parties. In fact, she made her accession day such a prominent part of the court calendar that it continued to be celebrated into the 18th century as a national holiday.

Yet even Elizabeth’s accession day celebrations struggle to rival the splendid global pageantry of the jubilees of George III, Queen Victoria (r1837–1901) and George V (r1910–36). Over the page, I chart the highs and lows of their celebrations, from the thronging crowds who turned out to see them to personal battles with grief and mental instability.



#### Hats off to George

Londoners congregate outside the city's Mansion House to celebrate George III's golden jubilee, 1809. The festivities saw the ailing king making his final public appearances

## George III's last hurrah

Although his people fully embraced his golden jubilee, the king's "ulcer'd mind" left him largely unable to celebrate

**I**n contrast to every other golden jubilee since, George III marked the beginning, not the end, of his 50th year on the throne. The "Grand National Jubilee", as it was known, began on 25 October 1809 with festivities across the United Kingdom and the British colonies. The governor of India threw a fête in Bombay on 4 June, the king's birthday, while in Britain the price of candles had begun to rise from as early as March that year as people planned for indoor jubilee parties.

Most of the events were scheduled around the anniversary itself, and shops were closed so that everyone could take part. They kicked off with balls in Basingstoke and Wokingham and, on 25 October, the king and queen, along with three of their children, attended a private service of thanksgiving at St George's Chapel, Windsor. Other festivities included a firework display at Frogmore, a 50-gun salute from the Tower of London and a service of thanksgiving at St Paul's Cathedral.

George III's subjects entered fully into

the spirit of things. A number of children born during jubilee year were christened "Jubilee George" or "Jubilee Charlotte" in honour of the royal couple; military deserters and prisoners of war were pardoned; and monuments were erected, such as a statue of George III in his favourite seaside resort, Weymouth. There was plenty of jubilee merchandise, too, including a series of jugs and medals.

Sadly, because of his declining health, George III was unable to take part in most of the celebrations. From early in his reign, he had suffered from what he termed his "ulcer'd mind" – bouts of mental instability that became ever more serious and prolonged as the years passed. On 25 October 1810, the king appeared in public for the last time at a reception to mark the end of his 50th year on the throne. It was obvious to all those present that the "madness" had returned. Early the following year parliament passed the Regency Act, conferring George III's authority upon his eldest son and heir, who became prince regent.



#### Royal brew

A Wedgwood cup bearing a portrait of George III, designed to mark his 50th year on the throne. Jubilee merchandise – from jugs to medals – flooded shops across Britain

# How Queen Victoria stepped out of mourning... into the modern age

The enormous enthusiasm for the queen's golden and diamond jubilees proved that she remained in tune with the public mood

**T**he next monarch to reach the 50-year milestone was George III's granddaughter Queen Victoria, who had ascended the throne in 1837, aged just 18. It was with some difficulty that her ministers persuaded her to go through with the celebrations for her golden jubilee in 1887, because she had largely withdrawn

from public life after the death of her husband, Prince Albert, in 1861. On the anniversary itself (20 June) the queen had breakfast outdoors under the trees at Frogmore, close to where Albert lay buried. She then travelled by train from Windsor to London for a "large family dinner" at Buckingham Palace. "We dined in the

supper room, which looked splendid with the buffet covered with the gold plate," she recalled in her journal.

At the service of thanksgiving held at Westminster Abbey the following day, Victoria refused to wear her crown and robes of state, substituting them for a bonnet laced with diamonds and travelling in a simple landau coach. In so doing, she proved more in tune with the public mood than her ministers. At a time of economic hardship, the pageantry of a full-scale royal event would have caused widespread resentment. Vast crowds that "stretched to the limit of sight in both directions", wrote the American writer Mark Twain, turned out to cheer the queen's procession.

Ten years later, Victoria became the first monarch in British history to celebrate their diamond jubilee, which was made a Festival of Empire. Among the gifts that Victoria sent across the globe to commemorate the occasion was a white silk shawl to Harriet Tubman, a formerly enslaved African-American woman who had become an abolitionist. The significance of the colour was lost on neither woman: white was synonymous with freedom and power.

On 22 June 1897, the queen was driven in a six-mile procession through London, witnessed by huge crowds. Thanks to the wonders of what was then cutting-edge technology, it was also broadcast to cinema audiences across the world, with 40 camera operators stationed along the route.

An open-air service was held outside St Paul's so that the queen could take part from within her carriage rather than climb the steps to the cathedral. Lame from rheumatism and using a wheelchair, her health was declining rapidly. But the adoration of the crowds left a deep impression on the queen, who wrote in her journal: "No one ever, I believe, has met with such an ovation as was given to me... The cheering was quite deafening & every face seemed to be filled with real joy. I was much moved and gratified."

## Badge of honour

A medal issued to all Freemasons in the UK to mark Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee in 1897



## Hero's welcome

Crowds gather at Windsor Castle during Queen Victoria's golden jubilee celebrations, 1887. During the festivities, revellers "stretched to the limit of sight in both directions", wrote Mark Twain



**National treasure**

George V, flanked by his wife, Queen Mary, acknowledges well-wishers during his silver jubilee procession. "The enthusiasm was indeed most touching," he said of the celebrations

# When George V turned monarchy into a religion

The silver jubilee of 1935 gave Britons the opportunity to show their affection for a king who had steered them through the war

**T**here would not be another golden jubilee until Elizabeth II's in 2002. The only other jubilee of any kind between the reigns of Victoria and Elizabeth II was that of George V, who celebrated his silver jubilee in May 1935.

A willingness to respond to his people's desires had made George a popular king. He had become the first British sovereign to record a Christmas broadcast, and he acted as a vital figurehead for the nation during the First World War. As a result, the silver jubilee celebrations prompted an outpouring of affection among his subjects.

The celebrations began on 6 May with a procession through London to St Paul's Cathedral for a ceremony of thanksgiving. The king recorded his astonishment at: "The

greatest number of people in the streets that I have ever seen in my life... The enthusiasm was indeed most touching."

On another carriage ride that month, George was joined by his granddaughter, the future Elizabeth II. Meanwhile, Britons celebrated with garden parties, pageants and sports events, and every child born on jubilee day was given a commemorative silver cup. In a jubilee speech broadcast to the nation, the king gave thanks "from the depths of his heart to his dear people".

Reflecting on the celebrations, prime minister Ramsay MacDonald observed: "We all went away feeling that we had taken part in something very much like a holy communion."

This marked an important moment in

the evolution of the crown. As one commentator has since put it: "Monarchy was no longer simply in alliance with religion; it had become a religion." **H**

**Tracy Borman** is joint chief curator of Historic Royal Palaces and the author of *Crown & Sceptre* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2021)

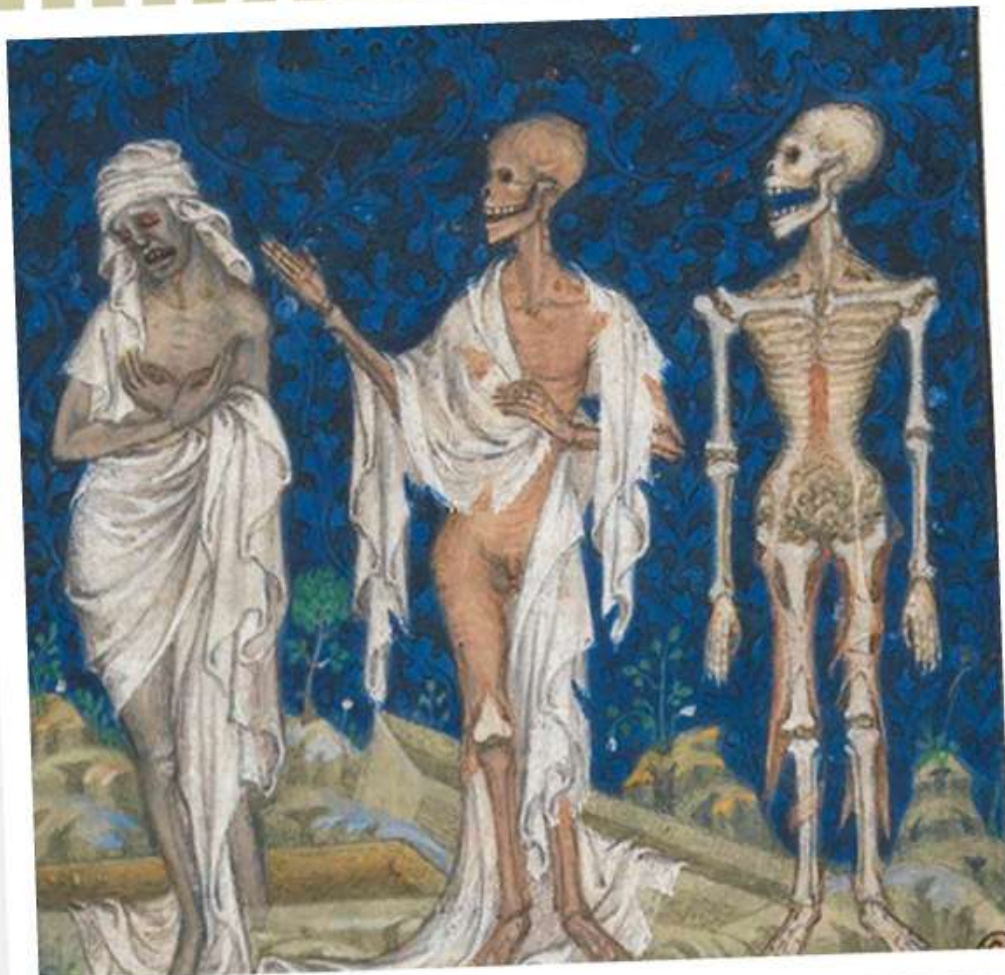
**WATCH**

Look out for a documentary on the **Crown Jewels**, which will be airing on BBC One soon



**ONLINE**

Tracy Borman recently presented a **five-part HistoryExtra monarchy masterclass**. Watch here: [historyextra.com/monarchy-masterclass](https://www.historyextra.com/monarchy-masterclass)



## // When the Black Death arrived in Europe, it was like striking a match in tinder //



The medievalist and historian of medicine **Monica H Green** tells Ellie Cawthorne how scientific advances have changed our thinking on what caused the Black Death – and why it was so devastating

**Ellie Cawthorne** As a leading expert in the field of Black Death studies, how would you say science has changed the picture for research into this dark episode in human history?

**Monica Green** I have to be able to talk about the Black Death – it's part of the remit of my job. But the problem with the Black Death was that, for 30 years, there was an intense debate about what caused it. And when you don't know the biological cause of a pandemic, it becomes a black hole in the story that you can throw all kinds of theories into. So I had spent most of my career being frustrated about not being able to tell a coherent story about what was clearly a major historical event.

But in the last couple of decades there's been an absolute sea change, caused by something called paleogenetics. You can now take modern laboratory techniques and apply them to the past – enabling the genetic analysis of molecular material from 100 years, 500 years, 10,000 years ago. This has allowed us to identify the pathogens that have caused diseases.

And the first pathogen that was completely sequenced from ancient DNA was the Black Death. Right in the middle of modern London, near the Tower of London, there is a cemetery that was created when they heard that a great plague was coming in 1348. When the epidemic passed, they closed it and sold the land. So the site itself is dated perfectly. And then the science swooped in and established what was in the bodies of the people buried there. What they found there was *Yersinia pestis*, the bacterium that causes plague.

As this huge historical question shifted entirely out of the field of history and into the field of science, I found myself sitting on the sidelines, watching the scientists at work. But then I had to ask – where do we as historians come in? Scientists can reveal what was happening at a bacterial level – but what are the ramifications for human populations? How do we read the science and interpret it? We historians needed to keep up with the geneticists and figure out how this changes the story. And what I realised is, it changes a lot.

**So how does the identification of *Yersinia pestis* as the cause of plague help historians?**

As a medievalist, I've been used to building



**Growing concern** A doctor lances a bubo in a 14th-century fresco. Science is suggesting that plague has swept back and forth across Eurasia for millennia



## Microscopic killer

The identification of *Yersinia pestis* (pictured) as the bacteria that caused plague has proven a game-changer in tracking the Black Death's evolution

PREVIOUS PAGE: An illustration from the prayer book of Bonne of Luxembourg, who died of plague in 1349. "How did a disease from central Asia kill people in London before aviation?" asks Monica Green

a story around written sources. But the trouble was, medieval writers used modes of description that were never going to satisfy us – they described the disease in terms of miasmas [unhealthy vapours], carbuncles [boils on the skin] and fevers – without, of course, using a thermometer. But that's all changed. Now that we have the biological criteria for *Yersinia pestis*, we know what symptoms we should be looking for, and we can identify potential vectors [carriers of disease]. We can even think about what kind of ecological shifts might have been going on that would allow this disease to proliferate.

**Is there a particular breakthrough moment in the scientific research that you'd like to point to?**

The big transformation came in a 2011 study using genetic material from London that published an entire *Yersinia pestis* genome [an organism's complete set of genetic material].

When you have a portion of the genome, you can say what the organism is – whether that's a banana, a gorilla or a single-celled pathogen. However, once you have the *entire* genome, you can compare that to every other genome [from the same species] you have from anywhere in the world and you can create a phylogenetic tree, which is

essentially just a family tree.

Every time a new genome is published, whether modern or ancient, it gives you more information about the evolutionary history of the whole species of the pathogen. For me, that has transformed what we can now say about the history of the Black Death. For example, we now know that in both California and Arizona today there are strains of plague that are descendants from strains around at the time of the Third Plague Pandemic, which peaked in the late 19th century.

### Have these advances enabled us to establish how old plague is?

Us historians working with our written documents have traditionally talked about three plague pandemics: the Justinianic Plague [c 541–750AD]; the 1340s Black Death and the outbreaks that followed it; and a modern plague pandemic coming out of Hong Kong in the late 19th century and extending into the 20th century.

But in 2015, something happened that nobody had anticipated: *Yersinia pestis* was retrieved from Bronze Age samples. This Bronze Age study was transformative for historians, as it serves as evidence of plague from before systems of writing. Now we can identify plague moving back and forth across northern Eurasia for millennia. The oldest sample we have of *Yersinia pestis* in a human body is about 5,000 years old, and it is estimated that the organism itself is probably about 7,000 years old.

Almost all of the late Neolithic and Bronze Age recoveries that have been found so far are individuals. No mass graves – which would indicate a sudden and intense outbreak – have been discovered yet. So we cannot say at this point whether we are looking at evidence for pandemics (where there's really massive human morbidity all at the same time), or whether we're dealing with some kind of slow, creeping thing that's moving through rodent populations and only once in a blue moon getting into a human population.

### Do we know where *Yersinia pestis* originated?

So far, most of the late Neolithic and Bronze Age samples are coming from northern Eurasia – areas in modern-day China and Russia. But there's a new Bronze Age sample that's come from England, so it was already widely disseminated in this period.

Interestingly, the strains of plague alive



**Breeding ground** The Tian Shan mountains in Kyrgyzstan are home to strains of plague that are closely related to both the Black Death and Justinianic pandemics



### A host of fleas

A depiction of a marmot in 1605. This large rodent may be the reason that the “Big Bang” of *Yersinia pestis* occurred at the juncture between China and Kyrgyzstan

today that are most closely related to both the Black Death and the Justinianic Plague are found in a single area – the Tian Shan mountains and the Junggar Basin. On a modern map, that's at the juncture between China and Kyrgyzstan. Why might that be?

We can assume for the moment that strains of plague persist in that particular ecology because of marmots, which are among the biggest rodents in the world. [Marmots living in this border region today still have strains of *Yersinia pestis* closely associated with strains found in the bodies of historical plague victims].

As we've traditionally thought about it, the Justinianic Plague happened in the Mediterranean, and the Black Death happened in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, before spreading to north-west Europe. So how does a marmot disease from central Eurasia end up killing humans in western Europe? That's the big challenge to explain historically: how we get from Kyrgyzstan to London before there are aeroplanes.

### So what's your theory? How *did* the Black Death travel from central Asia to north-west Europe?

To answer this question, you need to look at the phylogenetic trees of the Black Death. These show that, not only do we have the branch that gets to Europe, but we also have three other branches that are created at the

**// Then something happened that no one had anticipated: *Yersinia pestis* was found in Bronze Age samples //**

same time. The bullseye of this proliferation is Kyrgyzstan. So, as a historian, you have to say, OK, what was happening there?

We also need to look at an earlier period. The geneticists call this moment the “Big Bang” – a sudden explosion of *Yersinia pestis* in all these different directions. But what caused this Big Bang and when did it occur? They say it might have happened in the 13th century, maybe even in the 12th century. And I, as a medieval historian, say: “Well, something big *did* happen in the 13th century.” That was the rise of the Mongol empire. The largest land empire in human history seems to have been quickly followed by the largest pandemic in human history. Can that be a coincidence?

#### How might the rise of the Mongol empire have been connected to the spread of plague across medieval Eurasia?

I’ve identified a possible mechanism of transmission, connected to major movements of populations triggered by the Mongols’ wars and conquest. And that is army provisioning. In the 1250s, the Mongols were moving through central Eurasia. They got as far as Syria and were even threatening the Mamluk regime in Egypt. Importantly, they brought some of their own provisioning from the foothills of the Tian Shan mountains. One of the texts that I found said the Mongols were bringing with them a special kind of the cereal crop millet.

I spent weeks looking up the history of the different kinds of millet. One was described by the sources as a kind of super food – they claimed you could feed a cup of it to a soldier in the morning, and it would sustain him for the rest of the day. After finding that one detail, all the other pieces of the puzzle fell into place. If you’re provisioning your army as it’s moving across swathes of land, you’re transporting huge sacks of grain. And what loves huge sacks of grain? Rodents.

This is one potential scenario. But the point is that it satisfies what needs to be satisfied in terms of historical explanation.

#### Does this mean we have to reconsider the geography of the Black Death? Should we be re-examining how far it spread?

There’s no explanation as to why the edges of the traditional Black Death map are where they are. That’s always troubled me. Why didn’t plague also move eastward? Why do we not have stories about the Black Death in China, Tibet or India? We still can’t answer



#### Death riders

Mongol cavalry on the attack in a 14th-century manuscript. Did their conquests supercharge the spread of plague west into Europe?

**Changing the chronology of the Black Death story does mean that we have to at least question the geography as well**

those questions fully, but historians of China are now looking more closely at the records, and a study has recently suggested the possible presence of plague in Tibet. So changing the chronology does mean that we have to at least question the geography as well.

Along with Professor Nahyan Fancy [of DePauw University in Indiana], I’ve also gone through Arabic sources, chronicles, medical writings and so forth, and found clear evidence for plague in what is now Iraq, Syria and possibly also in Egypt in the 13th century. So almost 100 years before our regular narrative of the Black Death starts, plague has already moved across central Eurasia.

What I’ve documented for the 13th century are sporadic plague outbreaks. But what happened in the 14th century is clearly different – there’s a systematic spread of plague, and the results were devastating.

#### How else has new research overturned previous thinking about the spread of the Black Death?

One of the oldest stories told about the Black Death is that of the Mongols besieging the Genoese-run merchant port of Kaffa. In this story, the Mongols had an outbreak of plague among their troops, and during the siege they hurled plague-infested bodies over the walls of the besieged city. The Genoese got infected



### Waves of infection

An Arab ship in a 13th-century miniature. "How does a local disease become a global disease?" asks Monica Green. "That can only happen if humans are involved"

### Animal attraction

Mongols transported millet (shown in a medieval health handbook) across central Eurasia to feed their armies – and the cereal may well have attracted plague-bearing rodents



and jumped on their boats back to Genoa, taking the disease with them to Europe.

But Professor Hannah Barker [of Arizona State University] has recently published a wonderful article reassessing this story. She was able to establish that there was no outbreak of plague associated with the siege itself. Kaffa was part of a trade infrastructure established between Italy and the Black Sea. And the big thing the Italians were importing was grain.

After the siege there were trade embargoes, and then in 1347, the embargoes were lifted. It was *then* that plague started moving to Europe, because the grain shipments back to Italy started again. What we can't explain right now is why so many grain supplies were contaminated with plague all of a sudden, whether there might have been a flurry of rodents or a new kind of flea that's involved in the transmission.

Once plague had reached the Black Sea and Mediterranean, the speed of movement was suddenly inflated, because now we have a maritime culture with ships involved. A ship hold full of grain is rodent-heaven, and if enough rodents survived the journey alive, they would have crawled off the ship, taking their fleas with them.

The Mongols were nomads. Whereas when plague arrived in Europe, it was coming into heavily populated, fixed urban environments that already had rodent infrastructures. It was like striking a match in tinder.

**We have, as no one needs reminding, been living through a pandemic over the past two years. Has this changed the way historians view plague?**

One debate that is very current about Covid is how pandemics end. I've come to accept that a pandemic lasts as long as the pathogen is still around in a way that can threaten human populations. That's something that's important to remember about the plague – that it didn't just disappear in Europe after the 1340s. It came back in the 1350s and 1360s, and then in subsequent waves all the way through to the 17th century. It hit one town and then it hit another. It was terrifying. It was still incredibly lethal, and no one knew when it was going to strike again.

Plague and Covid are different diseases, but what defines a pandemic isn't just the pathogen but also the human involvement in the process of transmission. Every pandemic – from cholera to HIV to flu – starts as a local disease. The question is, how does a local disease become a global disease? That can only happen if humans are involved. The successful pandemic pathogen will be the one that can most effectively exploit our mechanisms of travel, migration and exchange, transportation, connection and communication.

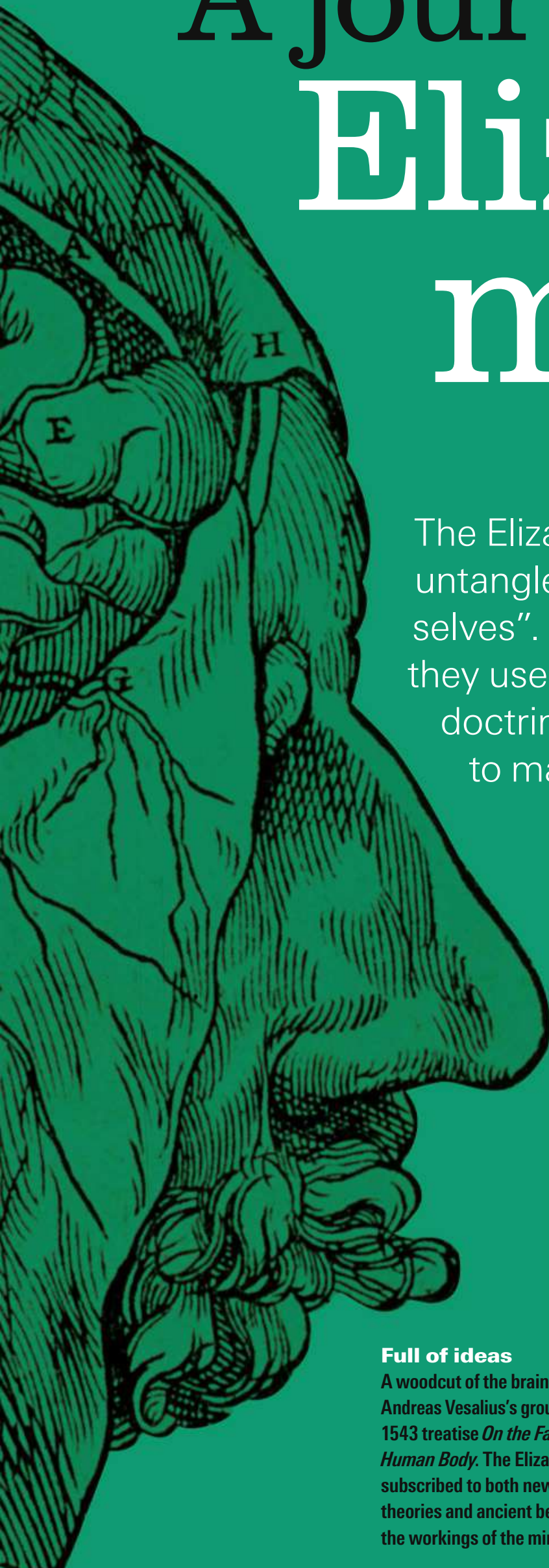
What has Covid done? It's exploited aviation. What did plague exploit? The fact that so many different societies were majorly invested in the grain trade. So that's the thing that we need to look at – the way that we as humans are creating the mechanisms to allow the pathogens to spread. **H**

**Monica H Green** is a historian and independent scholar, who was recently visiting professor of the history of science at Stanford University. Monica is one of the experts to appear on our new podcast series on the Black Death

**LISTEN** New episodes of our **six-part podcast series on the Black Death** are being released weekly. [historyextra.com/podcast](http://historyextra.com/podcast)







# A journey into the Elizabethan mind

The Elizabethans were desperate to untangle the mystery of their “inward selves”. **Helen Hackett** reveals how they used ancient teachings, Christian doctrine and new scientific discoveries to make sense of the mind

## Full of ideas

A woodcut of the brain from Andreas Vesalius's groundbreaking 1543 treatise *On the Fabric of the Human Body*. The Elizabethans subscribed to both new scientific theories and ancient beliefs about the workings of the mind

“**F**or him that hath lost his mind,” the bestselling Tudor writer Thomas Moulton recommended shaving the top of the patient’s head, then applying a mat of plant fibre to the bald patch. After a sleep, he reassured, “he shall be right weak, and sober enough”. While this treatment seems bizarre today, it reveals a crucial element of Elizabethan beliefs about mental wellbeing: the mind and body were intrinsically connected, so any disorders of the brain could be treated via remedies that were applied to the body.

As well as consulting medical books such as Moulton’s, many Elizabethans sought the advice of Simon Forman, a popular London physician. Forman, too, sometimes prescribed physiological remedies for mental afflictions. But his chief diagnostic method was – to our eyes – decidedly unusual. He always began by casting a patient’s astrological chart, reflecting the contemporary belief that both mind and body were affected by the movements of the stars and planets.

These practices exemplify the co-existence of diverse explanations for mental conditions in this period. They could be caused by internal factors, especially wayward humours – bodily fluids whose proportions and balance determined character and mood – or by external forces such as astral influences.

Other examples from Forman’s casebooks reveal yet more competing theories about the mind. One woman brought him a urine sample for analysis, but Forman “found no other disease in her body, but only in her head”. He told her that “the diseases of the mind are not seen in a piss-pot”, and that what she needed was “good counsel”.

Another patient, Susan Crosbe, whom he described as suffering from a “desperate melancholy disease”, engaged in what we would call self-harm. She “could abide no knives nor pins nor shears nor needles nor nails, but she must cut herself or thrust the pins into her flesh”, and she was tormented by suicidal thoughts. Yet in her case Forman diagnosed supernatural intervention, saying “the devil would speak oftentimes within her”, inciting her to self-destruction.

### Theories of the mind

The Elizabethans were keen to understand the “inward self”. Much as today many of us seek to manage our minds by reading books on self-help and mindfulness, in a similar way the burgeoning print industry of the Elizabethan era produced a host of works concerned with the inner functions of the mind. Titles such as Thomas Rogers’s 1576 *The Anatomy of the Mind*, and *The Passions of*



**Out of balance** Sixteenth-century personifications of the four humours (L–R): blood, associated with cheerfulness; yellow bile, linked to anger; phlegm, connected with inactivity; and black bile, identified with the intellect. Too much of one humour was thought to result in disease, with black bile causing melancholy

## Mental conditions were thought to be caused by wayward humours and the position of the stars

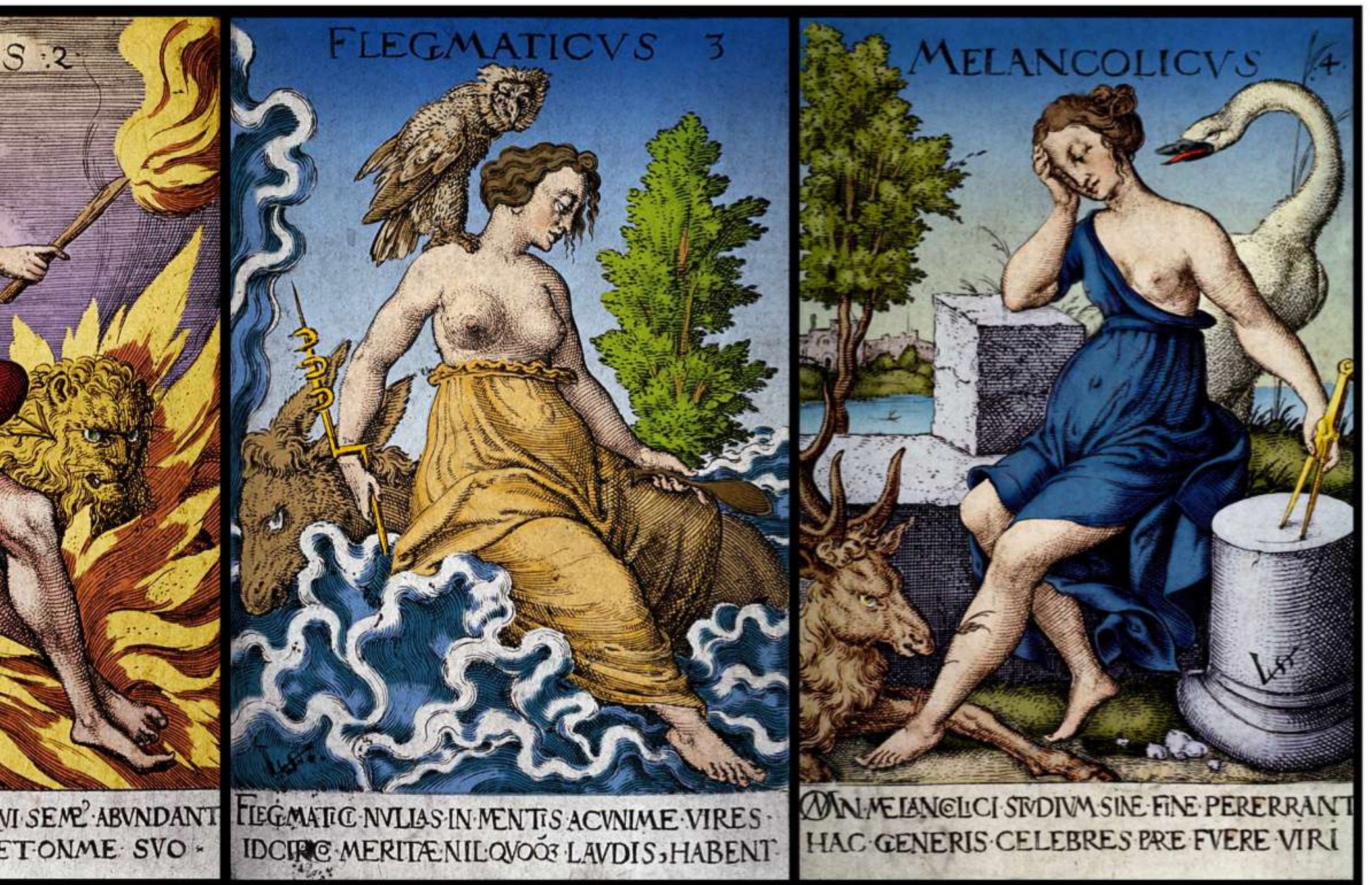
*the Mind* by Thomas Wright (1601) flooded the market. These texts contained an intense and tumultuous ferment of ideas drawn from disparate intellectual frameworks, making this a fascinating period in the history of ideas about the mind. Medieval medical theories vied with revived classical philosophies, while new religious practices jostled against emerging scientific discoveries.

Take the Elizabethans’ understanding of brain anatomy. The traditional model divided



### Sample study

A doctor examines a patient’s urine in this 1519 woodcut. The physician Simon Forman said “the diseases of the mind are not seen in a piss-pot”



the brain into three ventricles or chambers, with Imagination at the front, Reason in the middle, and Memory at the back. That classical system was still widely taught in the period, but in 1543 it was upended when Vesalius published his anatomical discoveries based on human dissections. These included a radically new, more accurate account of brain structure, identifying two large ventricles to the left and right, another two below them in the centre, and, controversially, no “special cavity” for reason to distinguish human brains from those of animals. These conflicting theories co-existed in Tudor England: in 1553, the illustrations for Vesalius’s work were published alongside incompatible text from medieval anatomy books that subscribed to the classical three-chamber model.

The Elizabethans also attributed different types of mind to different categories of people. Women in general were thought to have a humoral constitution that was cold and moist, or phlegmatic. This was good for fertility, but bad for the intellect. Disparagement of the female mind was commonplace: in 1597, for instance, a work named *The Haven of Pleasure* deplored “the weakness of



#### Way with words

Anne Cooke Bacon in a c1600 painting. Despite her achievements and those of other female scholars, Elizabethans tended to believe that women were too phlegmatic to be intelligent

[women’s] minds, and the imbecility of their understandings and judgments”. This seems astonishing in view of the impressive accomplishments of female scholars of the period, such as Anne Cooke Bacon, who translated from Latin John Jewel’s *Apology of the Church of England*, a major theological work.

#### Localised disorders

Because the humours were connected to temperature and moisture, it was also believed that geographical origin affected mental disposition. Many authorities, including the French philosopher Jean Bodin, asserted that the hot climate of Africa had an evaporating effect on its people, leaving them cold and dry, and hence melancholic: not only inclined to sadness, but also endowed with acute intellect. On stage this produced characters such as Aaron the Moor in Shakespeare’s *Titus Andronicus* (c1592), and Eleazar in *The Spanish Moor’s Tragedy* (1600), each of them by far the cleverest character in their play. The abhorrent forms of racism associated with the trans-Atlantic slave trade had not yet fully emerged, but the Elizabethans were not free of racial prejudice: these

## The Elizabethan mind

stage-Moors were ruthless villains, using their intellectual gifts to devise torments for their enemies. Nevertheless, they were among the most compelling characters on the Elizabethan stage.

### Frenzies of rage

The Elizabethans had many anxieties about the mind's potential to go wrong and felt the passions must be strenuously governed by reason. In *The Castle of Health* by Sir Thomas Elyot, one of the most popular medical books of the period, the author warned of the "apoplexies, or privation of senses, trembling palsies... frenzies, [and] deformity of visage" arising from rage. The reader could avoid these if "before he speak or do anything in anger, he do recite in order, all the letters of the A. B. C., and remove somewhat out of the place that he is in, and seek occasion to be otherwise occupied".

The imagination, too, was thought to be a destabilising force. Today we celebrate the imagination as an exciting creative power, but 16th-century belief in the link between mind and body meant that it could have alarming effects. If a woman saw a striking image at the moment of conceiving a child, or during pregnancy, the force of her imagination would imprint this on the infant. Many medical books attributed the case of "a maid, rough and covered with hair like a bear" to her mother's eyes having fallen, during sex, on a picture at the foot of her bed of St John the Baptist "clothed with a beast's skin".

The Elizabethans followed the Bible's teaching that "the imagination of man's heart is evil, even from his youth" – it was unruly, deceptive and a provocation to sin. This was especially so in dreams: in waking hours the imagination formed mental images from sense-impressions of the real world, but in sleep it became "fantasy" or "fancy", drawing on its own resources to produce images that were false and bizarre. According to Thomas Nashe in *The Terrors of the Night* (1594): "A dream is nothing else but a bubbling scum or froth of the fancy, which the day hath left undigested; or an after-feast made of the fragments of idle imaginations."

Meanwhile, other Elizabethans persisted in ancient beliefs that some special dreams could be prophetic messages from God, making Thomas Hill's 1576 manual *The Interpretation of Dreams* a bestseller. According to Hill, to dream of drinking mustard meant that one was about to be accused of murder; to dream of a white ox "signifieth honour or advancement"; but to dream of elephants "signifieth sorrow". However, even dream-interpreters like Hill acknowledged the difficulty of determining

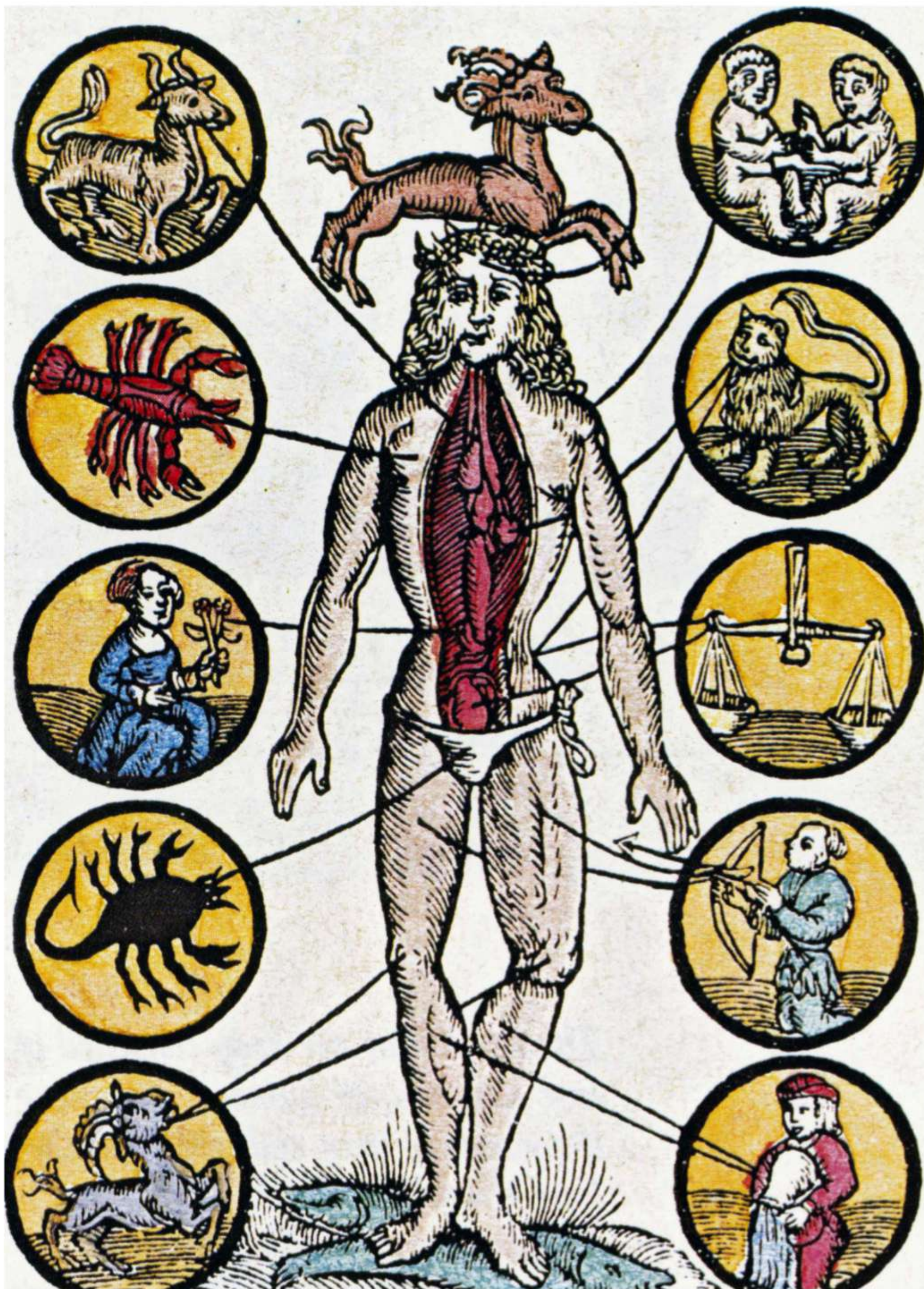


**Complex character** Aaron the Moor brandishes a knife in *Titus Andronicus*. Shakespeare and other Elizabethan playwrights often presented Africans as ruthless and intelligent villains

**The Elizabethans devoutly followed the Bible's teaching that "the imagination of man's heart is evil, even from his youth"**



**Devil's work** An illustration from the *Breviary of Health*, which discussed demonic possession



**Star signs** A woodcut from 1512 showing the parts of the body with which Zodiac signs were associated – for example, Aries was thought to govern the head. Elizabethans set much store in the movement of the stars, with astrological charts used to help diagnose maladies



### Highway to hell

Demons carry off a soul in this 1573 woodcut from *A Booke Declaring the Fearfull Vexation of one Alexander Nyndge*. He was apparently possessed, with his “back bending inward to his belly”

whether any particular dream was of the meaningful or meaningless type.

The imagination was thought to be especially over-active and uncontrolled in those whose reason was weak, such as melancholics and women. Medical works eagerly recounted the delusions of melancholics. According to *The Touchstone of Complexions* (1576), one “thought himself to have a nose so big, and of such a prodigious length, that he thought he carried about with him the snout or muzzle of an elephant”. Another patient “thought his buttocks were made of glass, insomuch that he durst not do anything but standing, for fear lest if he should sit, he should break his rump, and the glass fly into pieces”.

Reginald Scot, author of *The Discovery of Witchcraft* (1584), dismissed supposed witches as “poor melancholic women” suffering foolish fantasies of magical powers; “the stopping of their monthly melancholic

flux or issue of blood” (the menopause) had made them cold and dry, hence melancholic, and vulnerable to disordered imaginations.

Scot was on the sceptical side of a raging debate about the role of supernatural factors in mental disorders. So was Edward Jorden, a physician who tried to exonerate Elizabeth Jackson, on trial for witchcraft in 1602, by proposing a medical explanation for the strange symptoms of her supposed victim, Mary Glover. Jorden argued that “suffocation of the mother” – the supposed volatility and mobility of the womb within the body – affected the mind, causing “frenzies, convulsions, hiccups, laughing, singing, weeping, crying, etc”. (This would later be called “hysteria”.) Jorden’s defence of Jackson failed in court, but many shared his doubts about her guilt, and she was released after a short time in prison.

### In thrall to demons

Many Elizabethans attributed mental instability to the devil. A discussion of madness in Andrew Boorde’s mid-16th-century *Breviary of Health* distinguished between “maniac persons”, whose condition “cometh of infirmities of the body”, and “demoniac persons”, who were “possessed of some evil spirit”. Among the victims of demonic possession was one Alexander Nyndge, who in 1573 was apparently terrifyingly transformed, “his chest and body swelling, with his eyes staring, and his back bending inward to his belly”. A hollow voice intoned from within him: “I come for his soul.”

Sceptics questioned the reality of demonic possession; indeed, some supposed de-

moniacs confessed to faking symptoms. Yet there was general assent that all minds were vulnerable to incursions by Satan, for whom black bile – the substance in the body that caused melancholy – was thought to provide a congenial habitat. *The Touchstone of Complexions* explained how evil spirits could “slyly and secretly glide into the body” like a “foul-smelling stench” or “a noisome and ill air”, then interfere with the “inward dispositions and thoughts”, introducing sinful and criminal intentions. One of the chief reasons for the Elizabethans’ intense interest in the mind was the need for everyone to be on constant guard against evil thoughts implanted by the devil, by looking within and assiduously monitoring their own mental and spiritual state.

Elizabethan beliefs about supernatural influences on the mind, as well as their medical theories, can seem remote from our modern age of psychology and neuroscience. Yet they were wrestling with many questions about the relations between mind, body and selfhood that continue to perplex us today. Poised at the intersection between classical, medieval and emerging scientific systems of thought, this was a momentous period in the history of ideas about the mind. **H**

Helen Hackett is a professor of English literature at University College London. Her latest book is *The Elizabethan Mind* (Yale University Press, 2022)

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**One author dismissed supposed witches as “poor melancholic women” suffering foolish fantasies of magical powers**

# Raised by wolves

Feral children have fascinated and frightened people for centuries, raising questions about what it means to be human. **Richard Sugg** shares the stories of some of these wild children – and explains why their return to society was not always a happy one

BRIDGEMAN

## One of the pack

Mowgli is surrounded by wolves in a 1937 illustration from Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*. In the past, feral children have been found living with animals such as wolves and bears



## Wild children

**J**oin me for a moment at a royal hunt in France, in 1737. Far ahead of the main pack of riders and dogs, one figure hurtles with incredible speed after fleeing hares and rabbits, bringing back prey to the main party before they can catch up. But look closer: the creature racing on all fours across the grass is not a dog but a girl of perhaps 15.

Her name was Memmie le Blanc, known as “the wild girl of Songi” after the village Songy, in north-eastern France, where she was captured in 1731. At that time, she had apparently slept easily in the branches of a tree, sung like a bird, and flown up and down tree trunks with the ease of a squirrel.

Local villagers (writes the author Michael Newton) fled from this feral child as if she were the devil itself. Meanwhile, Lord Monboddo, an early theorist of human evolution, took a more scientific interest in Memmie. When this girl learned (or recovered) language, she revealed that her wild life had not been an entirely easy one.

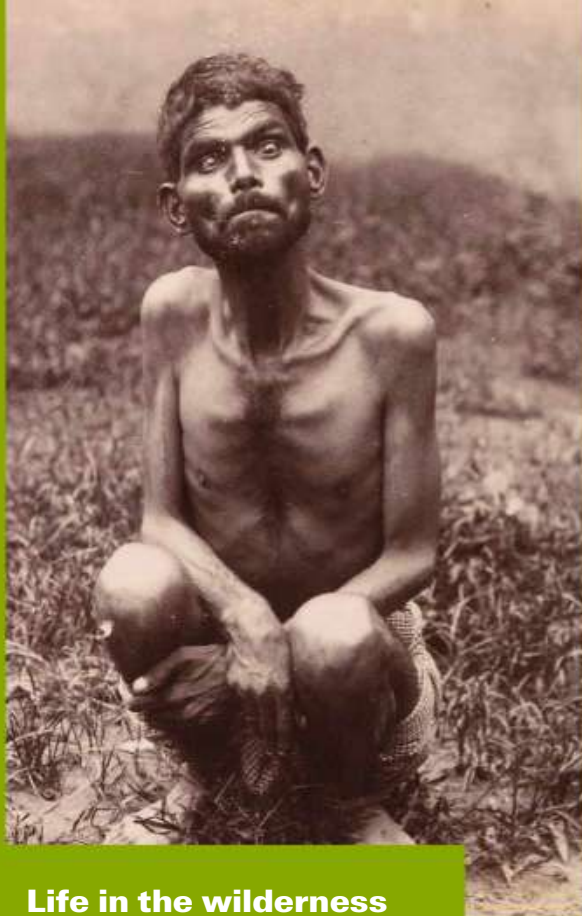
Ironically, though, it was her assimilation into French civilisation that nearly killed her. Wine and salt caused Memmie to lose her teeth, and heated rooms and cooked food made her dangerously ill. She recovered after a doctor prescribed live pigeons and chickens, from which she sucked the warm blood. On another occasion in a château kitchen she seized a rabbit, stripped off its skin in a flash and devoured it raw. Like other feral children wrenched into the human world, Memmie now learned shame and embarrassment – chiefly from the nuns who sheltered her, and who were unable to wholly conceal their disgust at what she had been.

### The real Mowgli

For centuries, stories of our encounters with feral children have fascinated and frightened those who heard them. These hybrid people threatened to puncture the line dividing human from animal, and raised intriguing questions about disgust, shame and language, highlighting too the importance of a three-to-four-year window of development after birth.

Attitudes to Memmie during her lifetime had been split broadly between scientific curiosity and terror or revulsion. Yet by the late 19th century, some observers might more readily romanticise these strange children, as they did with wild nature in general. And so it was that in 1894–95, Rudyard Kipling’s *Jungle Books* gave the world the enduring figure of Mowgli – the boy raised by wolves.

Here, art was almost certainly imitating life. One candidate for the “real Mowgli” was a boy who was found living with wolves in the jungles of Uttar Pradesh in northern India in



### Life in the wilderness

Dina Sanichar, known as the “wolf-boy of Secundra”, c1894. He was one of several “wolf children” documented in India by British Raj officials during the 19th century

1872, and subsequently named Dina Sanichar. But numerous other “wolf children” were documented by officials of the British Raj through the 19th century and beyond.

Around 1847, for example, a boy seen with wolves near Chandour, also in Uttar Pradesh, was captured by a soldier and local villagers. He ate only raw meat and, though he would not permit people to approach him while he fed, he would happily allow a dog to share his food. This child was immune to cold; when given a quilt, he tore it up and ate it. In 1850 he was living at nearby Sultanpoor, and was said to be “very filthy in his habits” and to remain “fond of dogs and jackals”.

Perhaps stranger still was an 1893 account of “a living wild girl come down to Calcutta who was nursed by a bear”. She had been found “sitting by a huge bear near a den in a forest in Jalpaiguri” by labourers, who frightened off the animal with a rifle.

The possibility that the bear actually let

**Marcos stated that wolves, foxes and snakes were his friends, and that he spoke with them in a hybrid human-animal language**

### Chance encounter

Marcos Pantoja with a wolf. He claims to have lived with a female wolf and her cubs during his childhood, meeting them in a cave when he was only aged six or seven



the girl drink her milk thrusts us to the heart of the debate about relations between feral children and animals. Were these boys and girls raised *by* wild creatures, or merely *with* them – able to enjoy the companionship of animals, but left to fend for themselves when it came to obtaining food? Witnesses who first saw the Chandour boy with a wolf and her cubs stated that the mother seemed to guard all four infants with equal care. Similarly, in 1849 locals saw three cubs and a young boy go down together to drink at the river at Singramau in Uttar Pradesh.

There are many well-documented cases from Britain of one animal or bird fostering another. In the early 20th century, retriever dogs nursed both tiger and polar bear cubs at London Zoo. In the case of very young children who grew up with wolves, their complete dependency implies that the infant humans must indeed have been raised *by* the wild animals, and it would probably have been easier for a mother wolf to feed them with her own milk than with anything else.

Let’s consider another account. Born into extreme poverty in Andalusia in 1946, Marcos Pantoja suffered an abusive childhood until, at age six, his parents sold him to a local landowner, who put him to work with a goatherd in the Sierra Morena mountains. When the goatherd vanished one day, Pantoja learned to feed himself by watching birds and animals eating berries and roots. He later recalled that at around six or seven, he took shelter from a storm in a cave, alongside a number of wolf cubs. Returning presently with meat, the mother wolf initially growled



### Forest family

Marina Chapman in 2013. She says that as a child she lived alongside capuchin monkeys in the Colombian rainforest, forging strong ties with them and carrying younger monkeys on her back

### Surrogate mother

Romulus and Remus drink from a she-wolf in this sculpture, possibly from the fifth century BC. Stories of children raised by animals have captured imaginations for millennia



at Pantoja, before sharing the food with him. And so began the happiest 11 years of Marcos Pantoja's life. Interviewed by the journalist Matthew Bremner in 2018, Pantoja stated that not only wolves, but foxes and snakes were his friends, and that he spoke with them in a kind of hybrid human-animal language.

By the time police found him in 1965, Pantoja could no longer speak Spanish, though he could understand it. Rudely snatched from his mountain home, he lived in a convent in Madrid before being let loose into "civilised life". He later recalled that the main things he then learned were embarrassment, fear and distrust, as he was humiliated, cheated and robbed by supposed companions. Given his ability to forage food, Pantoja may well have been raised *with* rather than *by* that female wolf. Dependent or not, though, it is clear that the years either side of his wild time were comparatively miserable ones.

### Living with the monkeys

In 1954, while Pantoja was beginning his long idyll with his wolf family, a four-year-old girl was playing in her garden in a remote South American village when a hand flashed down and a chemical-soaked cloth was clamped over her mouth. Together with other abducted children, the girl was driven far away, and was being carried through the Colombian rainforest when something panicked her captors – who abandoned her there.

Initially she descended into sheer terror and harboured a lingering hope that her mother would find her. But then, says the woman now called Marina Chapman, she

simply learned to live with monkeys. As far as she could later recall, she presently became immune to her own stench or that of the capuchin monkeys, and went about on all fours to the extent that her body began to harden for the purpose. She stopped even thinking in human words and began to learn something of the basic "monkey language" of her companions, making friends with younger monkeys and carrying them on her back.

After several years living among the monkeys, Chapman was recaptured. For some time she suffered a still more abusive life than Pantoja had, at the mercy of a brothel owner and then a mafia family in Cúcuta. Having overcome her disgust at living like an animal, she now had to overcome her terror of human life: the sheer speed of her first night drive, the fear of being drowned during a forced bath, even the terrifying hole filled with water into which she was supposed to relieve herself.

Most extraordinary of all, according to her account, was the day on which she fell violently ill after mistakenly eating poisonous tamarind. An older monkey, which she nicknamed Grandpa for his greying fur and halting movement, carried her to a pool where she initially struggled, fearing he would drown her. Then, she recalled, Grandpa pulled her head up in the water "and looked me straight in the eyes. As I looked back at him... his expression was completely calm. It wasn't angry, or agitated, or hostile... Perhaps he was trying to tell me something." She felt he was urging her to drink. She did

so, and presently vomited up the toxic food.

Marina Chapman now lives in Bradford, and is married with two children. Recently she told her own story, which some have cast doubt on. There have been questions about the memories of such a young child, though numerous memoirs give equally good recall of events at two or three years old. Meanwhile, the anthropologist Barbara J King has raised questions about Chapman's memories of capuchin behaviour, though, in my opinion, nothing sufficient to undermine the account as a whole. Many also doubt that animals will care for a human child in this way. But Chapman's account makes it clear how halting and difficult her relationship with the monkeys initially was.

Overall, there is no question that feral children have existed. Their stories have been documented by every kind of witness (scientists, soldiers, writers, missionaries and civil servants) for hundreds of years. Yet scepticism continues, and perhaps in the modern world, people find the experiences of people like Chapman too unsettling to contemplate. But the fact remains that, as with Pantoja, no one treated Chapman worse than her fellow human beings. **H**

**Richard Sugg** is the author of 13 books, including *A Century of Animal Stories* (2017) and *Mummies, Cannibals and Vampires* (3rd edn, 2020)

### LISTEN

Tune in to an episode of BBC World Service's *Witness* about **Peter the Wild Boy**, who was found living in a German forest in 1725. [bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p00gjc0c](https://bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/p00gjc0c)



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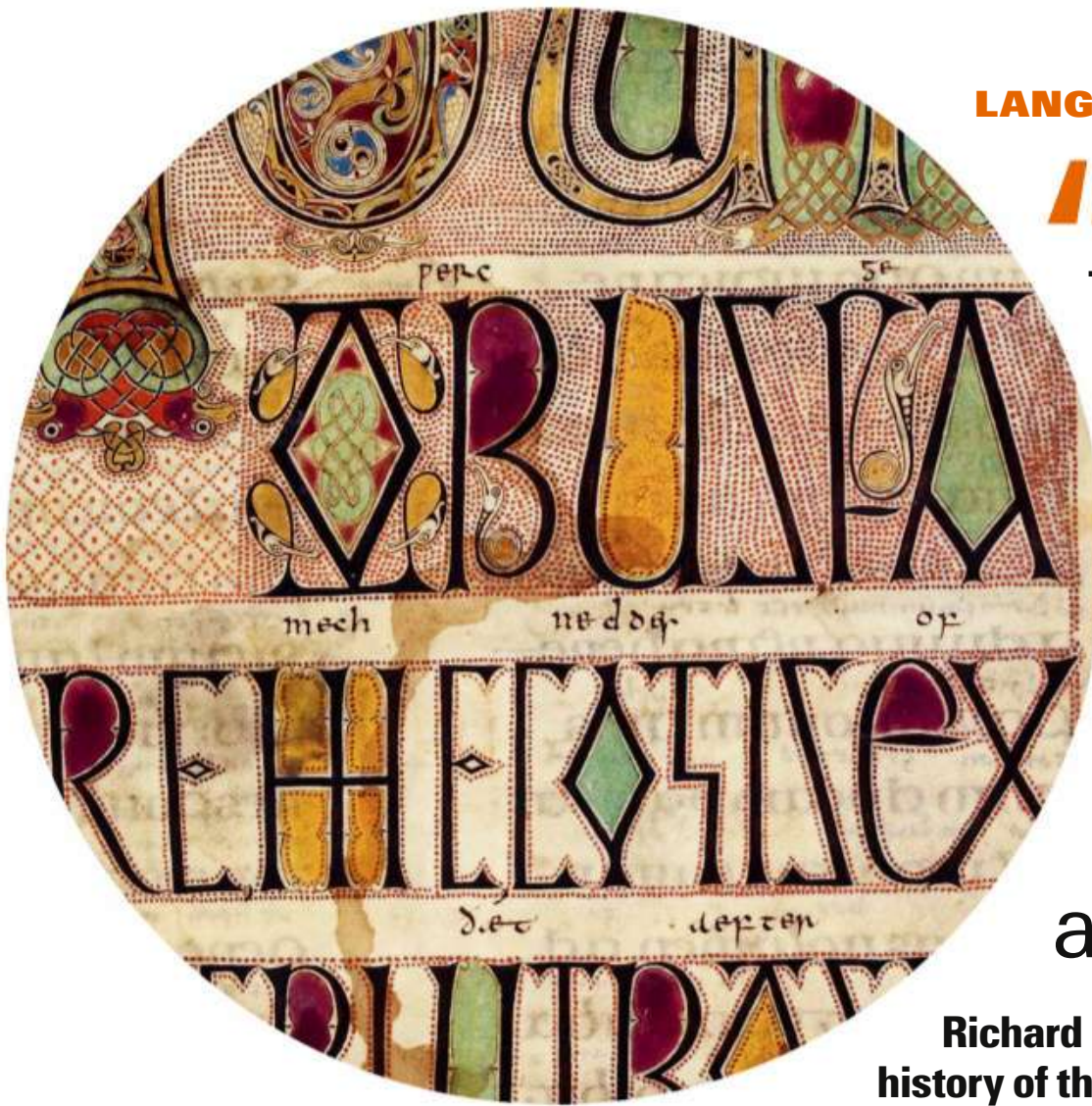
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## INTERVIEW / RONALD HUTTON

# “Medieval Christians were capable of imagining goddess-like beings that looked thoroughly pagan”

**RONALD HUTTON** talks to Rhiannon Davies about his new book exploring four female deities who straddled the pagan and Christian worlds in the Middle Ages



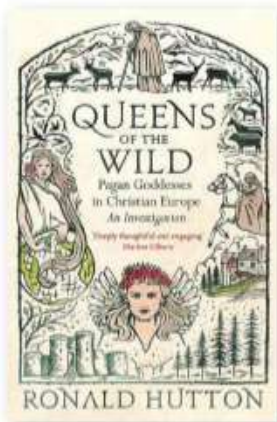
**Rhiannon Davies:** Your new book, *Queens of the Wild*, explores four goddesses who evolved into hugely popular cultural figures in the Middle Ages. Can you introduce us to them?

**Ronald Hutton:** First up, there's the figure of Mother Nature, or Mother Earth, who's mostly discussed by elite writers in the Middle Ages. Then there's the exact opposite – a charismatic female figure whom I call the Lady of the Night, who is very much part of the popular imagination or experience. What she does, basically, is scoot around with a retinue of fellow spirits and favoured human beings. Sometimes she and her friends just party; sometimes they visit the houses of particular worthy people and bless them and have a feast there. But they restore all the food and drink that they take.

The third is the Fairy Queen, who is the female monarch of a fairy kingdom. And the final one is the Cailleach, who's specifically a Gaelic personality – she's Irish and from the Scottish Highlands and islands and the Isle of Man. The Cailleach is a tremendous spirit of the land and, in Scotland, of winter.

**In the book you argue that, although these deities bear all the hallmarks of ancient pagan figures, looks can be deceiving. What exactly do you mean by that?**

There's a strange contradiction with a number of goddess-like figures in medieval culture, and that is that they don't appear to be inventions of the pagan ancient world. In fact, some of them seem to have been created in the Middle Ages. Yet, at the same time, there's absolutely nothing Christian about them. So they didn't fit in to the idea that something either had to be Christian, or it had to be a survival from ancient paganism. This raised the possibility that medieval Christian Europeans were capable of imagining beings that were utterly un-Christian and that looked thoroughly pagan.



**Queens of the Wild: Pagan Goddesses in Christian Europe**  
by Ronald Hutton  
(Yale University Press,  
256 pages, £18.99)

**So you contend that these goddesses don't necessarily originate in the ancient world. But were they in any way inspired by ancient deities?**

Very much so. A good example of this is Mother Nature. She was inspired originally by figures like the Greek Gaia and the Roman Natura, both goddesses of the Earth. But

what's really interesting about these is they weren't *great* goddesses in the ancient world – there were no temples dedicated to them. Instead, they were really literary figures spoken about by philosophers or poets. That's why Christians felt able to take them on in the Middle Ages and develop them massively into very important figures of the poetic and the theological imagination.

**You write that Mother Earth filled a gap in the Christian concept of the cosmos. How exactly did she do that?**

There were two gaps that Mother Earth filled rather nicely, and they're reflected by the two parts of her name. The first is that of a female divinity who is subordinate to God but is still really important. She looks after the natural world, on behalf of the guy who created it.

And the other part of it is nature. The medieval church had an enormous number of saints that in many ways fulfilled the functions of the goddesses and gods of the ancient world. But a lot of them didn't really connect with nature. So in that respect Mother Earth, who was more or less exclusively concerned with the natural world, came in very handy indeed.

**Is it fair to say that she is the most respectable of the four goddesses you discuss in your book?**

She's certainly less transgressive than the other three. Having said that, she was still very much a counter-culture goddess – she wasn't mainstream. In the Middle Ages, she was particularly beloved of people who spanned the boundary between philosophy and poetry. They really went to town in imagining her beauty, populating her world with palaces and chariots and associations. She trucked on, down through to the 19th century where she was reborn in even greater might in the minds of romantic poets. And today, she's wound up as the great goddess of modern spiritual feminism.

**Let's take the discussion on to the Fairy Queen. How were fairies thought of in medieval Britain?**

As far as we can tell, they were thought of originally as being nuisances. The Anglo-Saxons believed in beings called elves who are mostly recorded as giving people illnesses, especially sudden pains and afflictions. When you look at the records of fairy-like beings described by scholars and chroniclers in the 12th and 13th centuries, there are lots of unrelated stories of non-human beings who give help to humans, have sex with humans and just impinge on the human world, occasionally taking them into the fairy world.

Then you get this big literary theme of beings known as “fays”. These were superhuman equivalents of medieval ladies and gentlemen; ➤



## PROFILE

**Ronald Hutton** is professor of history at the University of Bristol and a leading expert in ancient and medieval paganism and magic. His books include *The Witch: A History of Fear, From Ancient Times to the Present* (Yale University Press, 2017) and *Pagan Britain* (Yale University Press, 2014)

PHOTOGRAPH BY  
JENI NOTT



### Folkloric figures

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE:

A fairy takes flight in a 15th-century image; witches dance with the devil in a woodcut; a portrayal of "Nature" in a medieval manuscript; the Cailleach Bhearra, linked to a fearsome Gaelic spirit



in other words, they were exactly like fair ladies and dashing knights but they had magical powers. By around 1200 they had captured the European imagination, especially in romantic literature, all the way from Germany to Ireland. And out of this was born the idea of a fairy kingdom, an organised bunch of fays with a queen and very often a king as well.

### What would this Fairy Queen be like?

She's typically a very glamorous figure, and often really likes humans. And the interesting thing is that, after wandering around in the literature for about 100 years helping out elite human beings, she then got into the popular imagination. By 1500, ordinary people were claiming to have met her and been looked after by her. Many said they'd been taught magic by her, which enabled them to set up as folk magicians or service magicians – healers, and finders of lost property, and removers of curses.

### You write that these magical healing powers fed into contemporary anxieties about witchcraft. What impact did these concerns have on people associated with the Fairy Queen?

It got connected to fears about witches when the people in charge of society and the legal system began fearing witches properly. This was in the mid-16th century, when Europe was plunged into the wars of religion, and the Reformation had really heated up into an all-out war between Protestants and Catholics.

A panic swept Europe about a completely new religion of demonic witchcraft, where groups of humans were empowered by Satan to worship him and work destructive, terrible magic, which would wreck human society and Christianity. So at this point people who claimed to have met the queen or king of the fairies and received magical powers from them could very easily be banged up, on the charge of having met the devil in female or male form and being seduced by him.

In the worst-case scenario, these people would be put on trial and often strangled and burned. This was particularly common in

Scotland, where the law was much harder on people who spoke to spirits. This was encouraged by King James VI, the ruler of Scotland (and of England from 1603 as King James I). He was convinced that witches tried to kill him personally, and wrote a book on witchcraft.

### Do any of the other three goddesses you write about have associations with witchcraft?

One of them has extensive connections to witchcraft, and that's the one I call the Lady of the Night. In northern Italy and the Alps in particular, the centuries-old belief in her became snatched up by the witch panics. Women, in particular, who claimed to have gone in her retinue were thought of as having worshipped Satan in the Lady's form.

### What sort of people were drawn to the Lady of the Night?

Quite often it was poor women – because they were the ones who often became folk magicians. It was a real career opening for them. And in areas where there was a popular belief in this lady, the claim that you had been out with her and she'd trained you was like a university degree. It qualified you to be a magician, and people took you more seriously.

### How far did belief in her spread throughout Europe?

She first appeared in the Rhineland – that's now west Germany running into eastern France and the Netherlands – just before 900. And the story then spread outwards, across Germany to France and northern Spain, and right across Italy as far as Sicily.

But at the end of the Middle Ages, this empire of belief broke down into various zones, in which the original idea of a night-roving superhuman female with human and spirit followers splintered apart. She's a popular figure in Germany and Austria to this day, under her late medieval names of Holda or Holle, and is often seen as a snow spirit and a benevolent visiting spirit. She's also known as Frau Percht, who's viewed as a scarier kind of female spirit who goes around punishing naughty children in midwinter.

### Which ancient pagan deities can we connect to the Lady of the Night?

The medieval churchmen linked her to Diana, an ancient Roman goddess who was affiliated with the night and witchcraft. Crucially, she's also the only pagan deity to feature in the New Testament – it is, after all, Diana's temple at Ephesus that creates a focal point for St Paul and his companion. So she was simply one of the best-known pagan goddesses to Christian medieval churchman.

The Lady can also be traced to various characters in the Icelandic Sagas, with varying degrees of success. In the sagas there's a tradition of non-human beings called trolls who revel at night, but they weren't led by a female character. There are also, of course, the Valkyries, female spirits who ride through the sky. But they're not particularly connected with the night, they don't have an agreed leader and they don't sweep up live human beings. They actually pick up the corpses of dead warriors and take them away to be revived, to fight for Odin.

### How did the Lady of the Night fit into the Christian worldview?

She didn't. Christians tried to cope with her in different ways. At the beginning, when she first appeared in popular tradition, churchmen said believing in her was wrong – the Lady was simply a silly superstition conducted among ignorant people who were deceived by the devil. They needed to stop believing in her and do some penance, perhaps by having only bread and water for a certain number of weeks or months.

That was the tradition for most the Middle Ages. But when belief in her got mixed up with the idea of a demonic conspiracy of devil-worshipping witches, then it was a much bigger problem. People were convicted and tried for going with her, and scores were put to death.

### The last feminine figure you focus on is the Cailleach. How far back can we trace her in sources?

In the modern version we can trace her back to the early 20th century, but her component parts go way back further. The modern idea of the Cailleach is that of an immense spirit of the land, a giantess who creates lakes and mountains and prehistoric monuments and, in Scotland, brings in the winter season.

But the component parts of her – I think the most ancient – come from a Celtic belief in hag figures. These are often very powerful, scary, non-human beings who tangle with warrior heroes in medieval tradition and eat them or beat them or else are slain by them.

There's also a literary figure called the Cailleach Bhearra who got mixed up with them. She's from a 9th or 10th-century Irish poem, a tearjerker, spoken by a woman who was once royal, powerful and beautiful but is now very old and forsaken. She became quite a popular literary character in medieval Ireland and entered folklore, where she got conflated with the older idea of mountain-building, lake-creating giant hags.

The result was this composite figure who's found in a lot of different forms in Gaelic folklore by the 19th century. And in the early 20th century, Scottish folklorists created out of this a composite ancient goddess spanning the whole Gaelic world. I think this idea is a modern invention, but modern entities have a life of their own, just like medieval entities.



A person dressed as Frau Percht at an Austrian parade. This enigmatic figure can be traced back to the Lady of the Night, who was popular in medieval Europe

## // Claiming you had been out with the Lady of the Night and she had trained you was like a university degree. It qualified you to be a magician //

### As well as telling the story of these goddesses, your book explores how historians' views of pagan beliefs have evolved. How did folklorists perceive paganism in the 19th and 20th centuries?

There was a great willingness to believe that paganism had persisted in most of Europe far into the Christian Middle Ages and maybe into the early modern period. Some argued that paganism had been the religion of the common people, with Christianity as a kind of veneer, believed in only by the elite. Others viewed it as a dual-faith system that permeated all levels of society.

There wasn't agreement among them as to how paganism actually ended. Some believed it just faded away painlessly; others thought it was wiped out under the name of witchcraft and that the notorious early-modern witch trials were of people who were practitioners of this surviving pagan religion. As it turns out, neither theory was entirely correct – and they were both overturned in the second half of the 20th century.

### Why did this school of thought fade so quickly in the later part of the 20th century?

There was an enormous cultural revolution in the late 20th century. Pretty much the entirety of Victorian and Edwardian thought got reviewed in the 70s and 80s, largely because the whole Victorian construct of empire, heavy industry and a strict social code had come apart in the 1960s.

In the 1970s young historians began reviewing the foundations of our beliefs, looking at the evidence again and questioning everything that we had been told about the past. It was an immensely exciting time.

### How did that revisionist spirit inform your new book?

Really my role here was twofold. I pointed out the extent of the demolition of these Victorian-Edwardian ideals about pagan survival by stitching together all the different bits of it; and I have proposed where we could go forward from here in recasting our view.

### What developments would you like to see in the study of the relationship between paganism and Christianity in the future?

We need a discussion of how far the terminology of Christianity and paganism still works. Perhaps we need to drop these terms altogether when speaking about culture in these periods, unless we're speaking about things that fit into very specific categories. I think we have to expand the remit of Christianity beyond the apparently Christian, or else we have to find a way of talking about a form of paganism that isn't opposed to Christianity and yet can be created by Christians as an alternative to it. **R**

#### MORE FROM US

Listen to an extended version of this interview with Ronald Hutton on our **podcast** at [historyextra.com/podcast](http://historyextra.com/podcast)



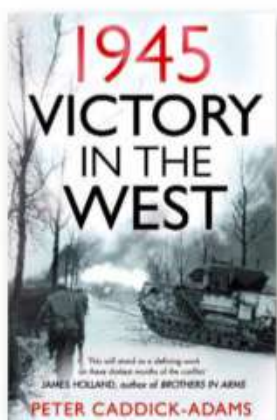
### Engineering victory

For troops to cross the Rhine into Nazi Germany, Allied engineers had to build temporary bridges, including this pontoon construction

## MILITARY

# The final slog

**TAYLOR DOWNING** salutes an account of the often overlooked last days of the Second World War in Europe, when Allied troops faced stubborn resistance from German forces



**1945: Victory in the West**  
by Peter Caddick-Adams  
Hutchinson Heinemann,  
652 pages, £30

February 1945. For many, the war in Europe is pretty well over. But Major Bill Deedes of the 12th King's Royal Rifle Corps (later *Telegraph* editor) saw it differently. Writing home, he railed against "the damned papers, which are full of propaganda and pretend the war is as good as won. By golly it's not. Lots of 16-year-olds are keen to die for Hitler."

This comment sets up military historian Dr Peter Caddick-Adams's excellent latest book. Many accounts of the war concentrate on the great set-piece actions such as D-Day or the battle of the Bulge and gloss over the final stages of combat. *1945* focuses on the last 100 days of the war in Europe, and the advance into Germany where many towns and villages were bitterly defended – and recent events in Ukraine have shown how determined and resourceful defenders can make it immensely difficult for an advancing army.

Two key elements impress in Caddick-Adams's account. First is the sheer scale of the Allied advance. As supreme commander, Dwight D Eisenhower had command of seven Allied armies, a total of 4 million men and

women. But that did not prevent Hitler's diehards from fiercely defending many towns. This is the second factor determining the final stages of the war. While many professional soldiers realised the game was up, *Hitler-Jugend* boys fought with obsessive determination. And almost everywhere the SS were equally fanatical. Houses that displayed a white flag as Allied troops approached were destroyed by the diehards. Old Nazis wanted the defenders to fight to the death, like Cologne gauleiter, Joseph Grohé, who demanded that the city be contested metre by metre in *unerbittliche Verteidigung* (unrelenting defence). Grohé himself then fled across the Rhine.

The first few chapters of *1945* look at the delay in the Allied advance in the winter of

1944–45 caused by the German counter-offensive in the Ardennes. But from February 1945 onwards, the advance rapidly got into gear. After the Colmar pocket was finally encircled in the south, Montgomery's 21st Army Group started a slow advance in the north.

By the end of March, progress through the Saar-Palatinate broke the back of the Wehrmacht. More than 100,000 prisoners were taken in this one area. General Patton's rapid advance soon led to the capture of Trier. Army Group commander Bradley was anxious to avoid a major fight to seize the city and radioed Patton: "Bypass Trier." Patton replied: "Have already taken Trier. Should I give it back?"

The events of March and April provide a thrilling narrative with the surprise capture of the only intact bridge over the Rhine, at Remagen; Patton's determination to cross the Rhine before Monty; and the major river crossings late in March using flotillas of landing craft, DUKWs and floating tanks. In the north, there was Operation Varsity, the biggest airborne drop of the war. Then thousands of engineers built a variety of pontoon and Bailey bridges. The fastest went up in seven hours. Some of these temporary assault bridges remained in use until the 1950s. Hundreds of thousands of men, tens of thousands of vehicles and vast stores of supplies began to cross the mighty Rhine. As his men crossed, Monty sent a message wishing them "good hunting".

In the "Ruhr pocket", five US corps surrounded 400,000 Wehrmacht soldiers. Hitler wanted a fanatical, Stalingrad-type defence. But after just two weeks Field Marshal Model ordered his youngest and oldest soldiers to return home. The rest surrendered. Model walked into a wood and shot himself.

As the Allied armies rolled across the Reich, they witnessed the aftermath of Gestapo executions of "defeatists". Bodies were strung up with signs hanging from their necks saying "*Ich bin ein Reichsverräter*" ("I'm a national traitor"). The roads filled with "Displaced Persons", escaped slave labourers or camp inmates, of whom 12.5 million were counted at the end of the war. Journalist Alan Moorehead noted how the entire Nazi state had relied on "millions upon millions of slave workers". He described "a vast moving human frieze" pouring down every road like "the breaking up of a medieval slave state".

Then of course came the liberation of the concentration camps. First Ohrdruf, visited by Eisenhower himself. Then Buchenwald and Dachau by the Americans. And Bergen-Belsen by the British. More followed. Few who saw the barely living survivors ever forgot what they had witnessed. And both armies called in film cameramen to record the horrors.

By the last days, the Allies were advancing rapidly against collapsing opposition. One

American armoured battalion advanced 59 miles in a day, but resistance did not end until the signing of the last surrender agreements.

Peter Caddick-Adams has spent years studying the campaigns that ended the war in Europe. He has lectured to military academies, taken groups of officers across the battlefields, and has read immensely in the vast literature of official histories and personal memoirs. His narrative is peppered with first-person accounts of the landscape of battle.

A key strength of *1945* is that Caddick-Adams knows the qualities that make a good combat leader. On almost every page is the story of a commanding officer, often of a division or a corps, showing a can-do spirit, inspiring his men and making good tactical choices – from the unflappable Troy Middleton, commander of US VIII Corps, to Richard Hull who at 37 was the youngest divisional commander in the British Army. He is

**// One American armoured battalion advanced 59 miles in a day, but German resistance did not end until the signing of the last surrender agreements //**

particularly impressed with those commanders who displayed an aggressive spirit and led from the front, such as Maj Gen Maurice Rose of the US 3rd Armored Division.

But Caddick-Adams is much weaker on the strategic level. For instance, he devotes only a couple of pages to one of the most momentous decisions of April 1945: when Eisenhower decided to leave the capture of Berlin to the Soviets, sending a direct message to Stalin to inform him. Militarily this might have been wise, but politically the consequences helped shape the Cold War. Churchill, who had a clearer sense of what lay in the future, was furious and appealed to Washington, but General Marshall backed his field commander.

Most accounts of the Second World War in Europe devote only a few pages to the last 100 days. *1945* corrects this balance and makes an important contribution to military history. It is also a great read and powerful reminder of how the Second World War in Europe was definitely not over until the final surrender. **H**

**Taylor Downing** is a military historian and author of *1942: Britain at the Brink* (Little, Brown, 2022)

## AUTHORS ON THE PODCAST

### Phillipa Vincent-Connolly on Tudor disability

"There was a strange mix of attitudes towards disability in the Tudor period. On the one hand, it was thought that if the mother had been involved in satanic worship, or the parents had sinned greatly, it might affect the baby in the womb. Yet, people with disabilities were also seen as being closer to God because they were already suffering on Earth. This meant that they were often cherished and honoured, as conduits to God and truth."



### Leo Damrosch on Giacomo Casanova

"Casanova had the most varied and extraordinary life. He invented a lottery for the French government and was a professional gambler, con man and spy, as well as a priest and a soldier. He even persuaded people he had magical powers! In one case, he managed to detach a very rich French noblewoman from an enormous fortune because she thought he could help her be reborn as a younger person."



### Jacob Mchangama on the history of free speech

"You can sketch the tense history of free speech all the way back to ancient times. In Thucydides' account of Pericles' famous funeral oration, Pericles explains how the Athenians of ancient Greece enjoyed debating, and paints a picture of tolerance between citizens. In contrast, the Roman Republic took a far more top-down

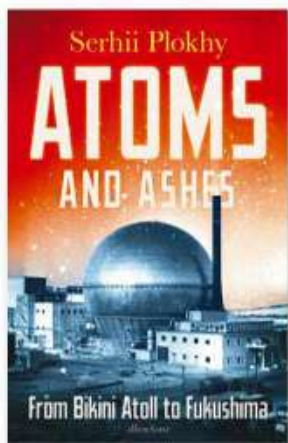
view. It was largely the elite who exercised free speech – not those considered 'the mob' by authors such as Cicero and Cato."



## SCIENCE

# Generating fear

**STEPHEN WALKER** gives a nervous welcome to a history of nuclear power, which focuses on the accidents and the disasters that have plagued the sector



**Atoms and Ashes:  
From Bikini Atoll  
to Fukushima**

by Serhii Plokhy  
Allen Lane, 368 pages, £25

Unless most life as we know it has been wiped off the face of the planet by the time this review comes out,

I'd urge you to pick up this book – and, as its author warns in his stark preface, be terrified. Serhii Plokhy is one of those historians whose finger seems to be unerringly on the pulse of current events. Just a year ago, he gave us *Nuclear Folly*, a dramatic retelling of when the world came close to nuclear Armageddon during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. Now in *Atoms and Ashes*, he takes a truly chilling look at nuclear weaponry's twin – nuclear power.

In a series of shocking, hour-by-hour snapshots, he details exactly what happens when nuclear power plants, ostensibly designed for peace and plenty, abruptly decide to go off the rails and melt down, blow up and spew enormous quantities of radioactive dust into the atmosphere. The only story missing here is the one in which the Russians fire high-explosive shells directly at a Ukrainian nuclear power station, and that's because, by the time Plokhy wrote his last sentence, it hadn't happened yet.

But the message is there, loud and clear. When humans mess with the guts of creation things will sometimes go wrong – and occasionally catastrophically. This is, explicitly, a book about accidents, from the lesser-known 1957 Kyshtym meltdown in the USSR to the 2011 explosions at Fukushima's Daiichi nuclear station in Japan – an accident that proved it wasn't only antique, badly built and poorly managed Soviet power stations that went haywire, while also giving the Japanese their third grim experience of nuclear fallout.

Of course the star performer on Plokhy's "list of the world's worst nuclear disasters" is Chernobyl, and as somebody who has written a book about *that* too his chapter is especially gripping, not least with his unsparing eye for irony. So we learn that it was, quite literally, the "graveyard shift" that first witnessed



**Dangerous clean-up** Workers who are decommissioning the Chernobyl powerplant and surrounding area are checked for radiation in 1990, four years after the most famous nuclear disaster in history

a massive explosion in the number four reactor during the early hours of 26 April 1986, setting off a chain of events that would lead over time to perhaps 50,000 dead.

And the theme continues with the 1979 meltdown at the Three Mile Island plant in Pennsylvania, which led to the evacuation of 144,000 people in what the veteran CBS reporter Walter Cronkite at the time called "a nuclear nightmare". Here Plokhy doesn't waste an opportunity to point out that it happened just 12 days after *The China Syndrome*,

**Windscale was Britain's attempt to lead the nuclear fuel field. Then a fire in one of its piles in 1957 hurled radioactive dust across a chunk of the country**

an Oscar-nominated movie about a near-nuclear meltdown, hit America's big screens.

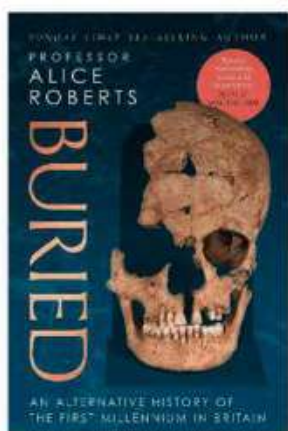
Nor does Plokhy omit our very own home-grown accident at Windscale in Cumbria, whose showpiece power station was Britain's attempt to lead the nuclear field until a fire in one of its piles in 1957 hurled radioactive dust across a chunk of the country, irradiating food supplies and almost certainly causing cancers for decades. "Oh dear," said one of the engineers when he first spotted the fire raging away inside the reactor, "now we are in a pickle." It was a sentence worthy of the best Ealing comedies, except this was no comedy.

With 440 reactors still active around the world supplying 10 per cent of our electricity, the darker realities of playing Prometheus, as Plokhy writes, are still very much with us. All of which makes the case for solar and wind farms more compelling than ever. At least they don't blow up. ■

Stephen Walker is the author of *Shockwave: Countdown to Hiroshima* (HarperCollins, new edition, 2020) and *Beyond: The Astonishing Story of the First Human in Space* (William Collins, 2022)

# Grave insights

**BRENNA HASSETT** recommends an account of life – and individual deaths – in Britain during the first millennium AD



## Buried: An Alternative History of the First Millennium in Britain

by Alice Roberts  
Simon & Schuster,  
352 pages, £20

Professor Alice Roberts opens her warm and illustrative history of Britain's

first millennium AD with an enigma. The enigma is, of course, made of bones, because Roberts is a broadcaster and author who has shared many of the best stories of British archaeology in the last 20 years by using the tools of her academic trade – most especially, her up-close and personal knowledge of the anatomy of death. Roberts' experience in parsing the complex scientific research behind the work of digging up the dead stands her in good stead here, as she takes the reader hundreds of years into the distant past.

The chapters flow through the centuries, occasionally eddying back and forth, but always taking in the vast number of ways to dispose of the dead in Britain. From a cremation at Caerleon 1,800 years ago, she takes us to the difficult world of death in infancy, exposing a tragic story told in tiny remains found at Yewden Roman villa. After that we visit the site of Great Whelnetham, where Roberts draws a line between decapitation burials, the brutalised bodies of slaves and the fear of the evil dead.

Confronted with barrow graves containing two men and a child at sixth-century Breamore, or the mass graves found nearby, we see up close the difficulty in teasing out the truth of the past – had they died in a massacre, or from plague? – without the magic of ancient DNA to adjudicate. Meanwhile, the messy world of identity in "Anglo-Saxon" England is laid bare, bead by bead, bronze by bronze, burial by burial, revealing a far more cosmopolitan world than the Dark Ages misnomer would have you believe. Finally, the book winds its way to a discussion of the Christian patterns of burial that have become so familiar to our society today.

It is clear these are stories that are close to the heart, chosen because they allow Roberts

to contemplate some of the universal themes that burial archaeologists must consider. The complicated nature of death, violence, status and belief are all part of this book; but so are science, storytelling and the modern technology cracking open the graves of the past. This book highlights Roberts' ability to condense decades of academic study into a few relatable pages. As someone who has spent decades myself staring into the empty eye sockets of long-dead skulls, I was impressed with the ease of communication of what are really quite technical details in order to tell engaging tales of burials in the first millennium AD.

While I found myself nodding along with her depictions of the science, I was galloping along with her quick and dirty histories. These are pitched at just the right level to sketch in a scene, but never so dense as to drown out the lives of the many different kinds of people who, a millennium or more ago, called Britain home. **H**

**Brenna Hassett** is a biological anthropologist and a researcher at University College London. Her latest book is *Growing Up Human: The Evolution of Childhood* (Bloomsbury Sigma, 2022)



## Precious artefacts

Gold crosses and the neck of a drinking bottle from a princely Anglo-Saxon burial. Alice Roberts uses grave goods to explore the world of those who made them

## FROM FACT TO FICTION

### Getting the scoop

**Louisa Treger** (below) discusses her novel about the investigative journalist Nellie Bly, who went undercover as an asylum inmate



## What drew you to Nellie Bly's story?

Nellie Bly fascinated me from the start. I wondered what kind of woman could feign madness and commit herself to an asylum for the sake of a newspaper scoop. I began to research her and discovered that she overcame a traumatic childhood and went on to achieve the extraordinary – despite, or even because of, her early life. Bly possessed courage and humanity, and she changed America's newsrooms and its mental institutions for the better. I wanted to tell the world about her.

## How did you research her time in the asylum, in 1887?

I visited the site of the lunatic asylum on Blackwell's Island, now Roosevelt Island, in the East river off Manhattan. All that's left is an octagonal tower, now a gentrified apartment complex. But I could easily imagine the grim institution on a bleak strip of land, the unreachable lights of Manhattan and Queens just across the water. The New York Public Library and the Library of Congress also opened their collections to me, and I discovered rich and exciting material there.

## How close did you stay to the history?

My novel broadly follows the real history, but I took liberties with the characterisations and chronologies, motivated by a desire to dig deeper into Nellie's emotional life. She wrote about her asylum experiences in the tone of a plucky girl reporter, whom nothing could faze. But I thought that she must have been affected by the atrocities she witnessed, especially given that she had an abusive stepfather and mental health issues during adolescence. Surely the asylum triggered those memories. And I let my imagination run.

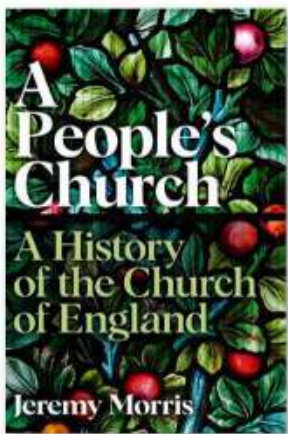
## Madwoman

by Louisa Treger  
Bloomsbury, 304 pages, £16.99

## CHRISTIANITY

# A congregation of voices

**SARAH FOOT** enjoys a new history of the Church of England, a book that finds space for the reflections of ordinary parishioners as well charting the deeds of the great and the good



**A People's Church: A History of the Church of England**  
by Jeremy Morris

Profile Books, 480 pages, £30

The formal history of the Church of England begins with the Act of Supremacy of 1534, which

declared King Henry VIII to be “the only Supreme Head in earth of the Church of England called *Anglicana Ecclesia*”. Yet, as Jeremy Morris demonstrates in this accessible and engaging book, the roots of Henry’s church lay firmly in the early Middle Ages. So much so that his Church of England could be understood “as the Church in England as it had been from time immemorial”.

Morris deftly guides the reader through the complex narrative of the church’s shifting fortunes, moving from the turmoil of the Reformation years, through evangelical and high church revivals, constitutional reform and the church’s responses to world wars, to the religious “crisis” of the 1960s and beyond. After a brief prelude looking at the medieval (“Catholic”) centuries, the book is divided into three sections: the “Age of the Monarch”, the “Age of the Oligarchy” and the “Age of the People”. In a postscript Morris uses a horticultural metaphor to contrast the church at its best – “like a well-rooted tree in a storm, bending to survive, but with roots which go down deep into Christian revelation, history and tradition” – with its less successful incarnations as “a tangle or knot of incommensurate claims and counter-claims, like an overrun garden gone to ruin”.

Monarchs, bishops and senior clergy necessarily dominate the narrative, but Morris illustrates the book throughout with vignettes about individual clergy and, where possible, lay people. Larry Banville, a 19th-century Norfolk gamekeeper, admired but doubted the sincerity of a sermon his parson preached about charity, not believing that “he would give a penny to a poor man if it would save his life”. William Taylor, a London footman who kept a diary in 1837, found his local Anglican church so full one Sunday that

he could not get in, and thus ended up at a Methodist “Chapple”, where he stayed “but a very short time”. Sunday observance coloured the childhood of Molly Hughes, author of the *London Girl* autobiographies, who remembered afternoons that “hung heavy” when “it seemed always to be three o’clock”.

Morris handles sensitively the fact that women are markedly less visible until near the end of his narrative, and devotes a good deal

of attention to the origins of female ministry (in the 19th-century order of deaconesses) and to influential Anglican women, including Florence Nightingale, Josephine Butler, Octavia Hill and Maude Royden.

Social and cultural contexts are explored throughout in parallel with the overarching political and religious narrative. Morris is particularly effective in portraying a sense of the spaces in which Anglicans worshipped, devoting much attention to changes to the place where the eucharist was celebrated. Occasional chapters break the narrative flow to discuss the “Great Churches” (former monastic foundations, Oxbridge college chapels and other churches set apart through history and function), the life experience of the clergy, or the importance of music in the Anglican tradition.

This is a rich and vividly illustrated book, which not only traces the history of the Anglican church, but demonstrates why it continues to matter. **H**

**Sarah Foot** is regius professor of ecclesiastical history at the University of Oxford

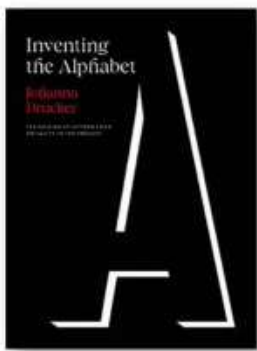
**// Sunday observance coloured the childhood of author Molly Hughes, who remembered afternoons when “it seemed always to be three o’clock” //**



**In the service of God** Elizabeth Catherine Ferard (1825–83), who was inspired by visiting a deaconess community in Düsseldorf, and revitalised the deaconess order in England

## LANGUAGE

### First letters

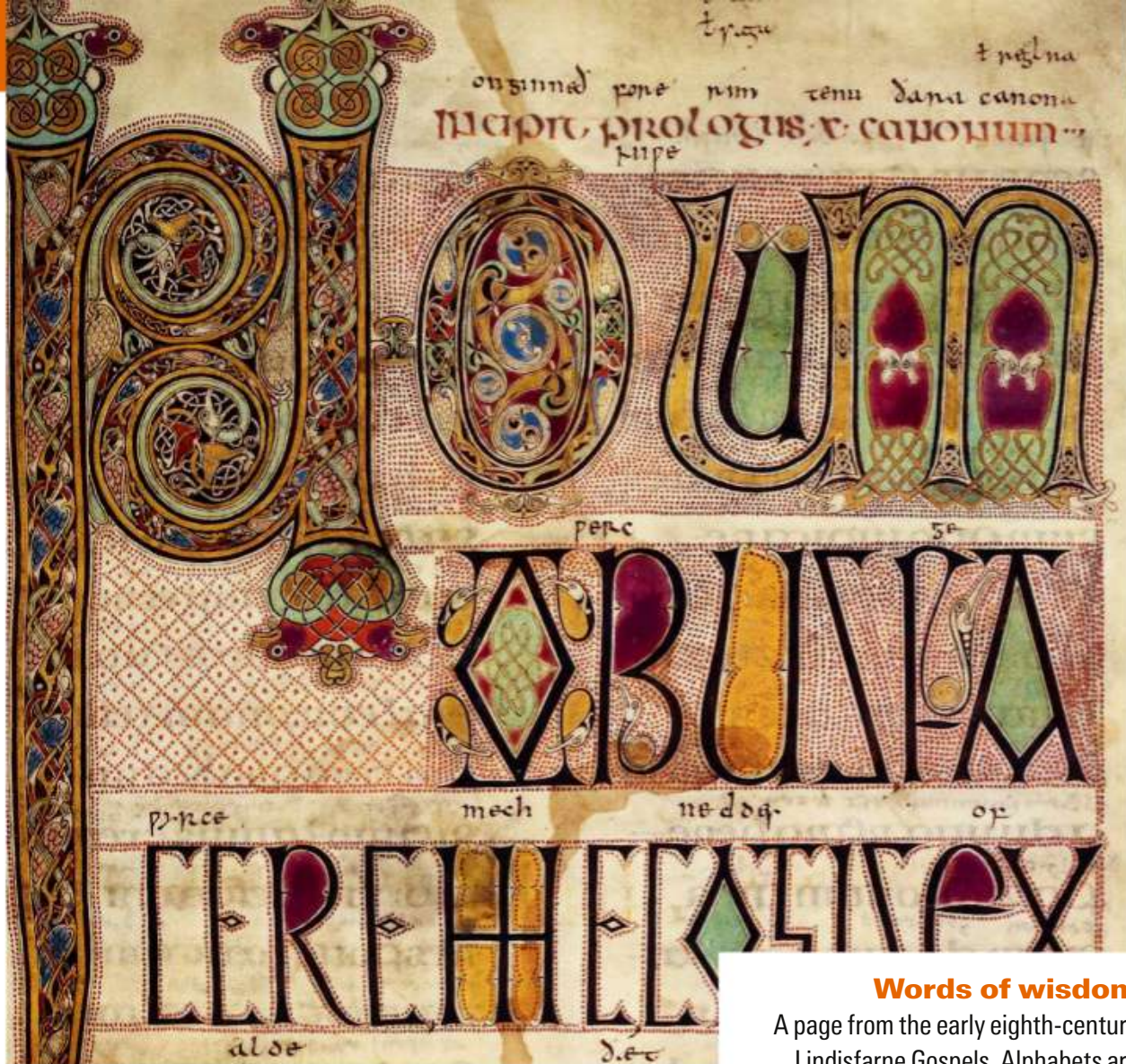


#### Inventing the Alphabet: The Origins of Letters from Antiquity to the Present

by Johanna Drucker  
University of Chicago Press,  
384 pages, £32

At the heart of one of the world's great store-houses of knowledge, the rooms built by Pope Sixtus V in the Vatican Library, are a series of pillars which literally prop up the library. Dating from the 1590s, the pillars are decorated with frescoes that celebrate "The Inventors of Alphabets" and depict mythical, biblical or historical figures as creators of alphabetic writing systems. The symbolism is clear: alphabets are critical to the development of western civilisation.

Johanna Drucker, a distinguished scholar at UCLA, provides a rich, detailed account of how western thinkers have understood the origins and development of the alphabet. Equally at home discussing medieval scholars, the learned divines of 17th-century England or archaeologists of more recent times, Drucker leads us through a complex series of intellectual approaches to a question that has perplexed scholars over centuries: where did the idea of the alphabet come from? The question represents more than just an interest in an ar-



#### Words of wisdom

A page from the early eighth-century Lindisfarne Gospels. Alphabets are often viewed as critical to the development of western civilisation

cane corner of knowledge. For many thinkers, especially in early modern Europe, alphabets were fundamental to the understanding of languages, and language was a critical issue in understanding the human mind. The founders of the Royal Society, for example, were deeply interested in such matters.

These debates have a contemporary resonance, as they assume a hierarchy of writing systems that can be traced back to ancient cultures in the near east and Europe. These alphabets continue to assert dominance across the globe, for example in modern computer

technologies where character-based systems (such as Chinese) have been forced to adapt around them more slowly.

Millions learn the alphabet in childhood, and Drucker's study opens up a fascinating realm of ideas and scholarship into its origins and meaning. **H**

**Richard Ovenden** is Bodley's Librarian at the University of Oxford

## MARITIME

### All at sea



#### The Ship Asunder: A Maritime History of Britain in Eleven Vessels

by Tom Nancollas  
Particular Books,  
336 pages, £20

In the office of Lloyd's of London, the pioneers of marine insurance, hangs the Lutine bell, recovered from the wreck of the ship *Lutine* in 1858. From Georgian ship deck to sea floor to modern city office, Tom Nancollas documents the life and afterlife of the bell and 10 other relics to tell the story of Britain's maritime past from the Bronze Age to the 20th century.

These fragments of maritime Britain offer a portal into everyday nautical life via the remains of a Cornish fishing vessel and the ropery of Chatham Dockyard, but also give insight into a broader maritime culture manifested in 16th-century seafaring "trophies" and imposing Victorian figureheads. Nancollas conveys a sense of yearning for a lost way of life, but simultaneously provides an honest reckoning with the forms of exploitation this world made possible. In particular, Britain's slaving history is considered through the aforementioned Lutine bell. Like the bell, the wrecks of slave ships and their artefacts could be recovered from the depths and brought into public view to facilitate a more direct confrontation with the dark elements of Britain's maritime past.

Although the narrative arc of British ascendancy and decline, especially from the 16th century onwards, will be familiar to most

maritime history enthusiasts, the strength of the book – and the skill of Nancollas as an elegant and evocative writer – is how his historical account is woven into his own personal journey across the heritage sites of maritime Britain. For while visible only in fragments, Nancollas shows that Britain's maritime past is still present across coastal towns and ports from the picturesque village of Robin Hood's Bay, and the cottage built with the timbers of a shipwrecked brig, to the propeller of RMS *Lusitania* that lies rusting in Liverpool's Albert Dock.

Together these relics – objects of the past in the present – make up *The Ship Asunder*, a composite of Britain's rich and complicated maritime history. **H**

**Philippa Hellawell** is an early modern records specialist at the National Archives, and specialises in maritime and colonial history

# Everyday Life in Victorian Britain with Emma Griffin



**Emma Griffin** is professor of modern British history at the University of East Anglia. A leading expert in the history of the industrial revolution and the social history of Britain in the 18th and 19th centuries, her works include the highly acclaimed *Bread Winner: An Intimate History of the Victorian Economy*. She is also president of the Royal Historical Society.

Each session combines an introductory lecture, extensive Q&A, and discussion of a primary source chosen by Emma Griffin.

You can book individual modules or block-book the whole masterclass.

**Tickets: £15 per module or  
£39 for all three modules**

**10, 17 and 24 June 2022**

This curated three-part virtual lecture series from historian and author Emma Griffin will explore the lives of people in Britain during the Victorian age. From the opportunities and perils wrought by the industrial revolution to the host of new social and sexual freedoms of the era, this masterclass promises to offer many insights into a fascinating period.



GETTY IMAGES/ HANNAH HUTCHINS

**Book now at [historyextra.com/events](https://historyextra.com/events)**

## FICTION

**Lion**

by Conn Iggulden  
(Michael Joseph, 400 pages, £20)

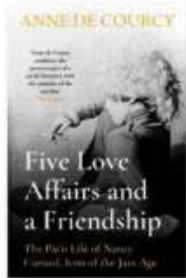
**Ancient bloodbath**

Conn Iggulden is no stranger to the ancient world, having written bestsellers set in Rome and Sparta. In *Lion* he revisits Greece, this time following the fortunes of Pericles, famous statesman of Athens. The action sees Athenian soldiers fighting shoulder to shoulder with the Spartans to take on the forces of the mighty Persians, but trouble is brewing between the allies – threatening to boil over into all-out war.

## CULTURAL

**Five Love Affairs and a Friendship**

by Anne de Courcy  
(W&N, 336 pages, £22)

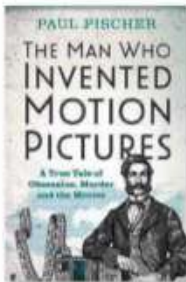
**Artists' muse**

With her kohl-ringed eyes and scarlet slash of lipstick, Nancy Cunard captured the hearts and minds of a string of creatives, from the poet Ezra Pound to the novelist Aldous Huxley. Here Anne de Courcy delves into five of Cunard's formative affairs as well as her enduring friendship with her mother's lover, George Moore, and in so doing paints a tantalising picture of glamorous lives in 1920s Paris.

## ENTERTAINMENT

**The Man Who Invented Motion Pictures**

by Paul Fischer  
(Faber & Faber, 416 pages, £20)

**Movie mystery**

American inventor Thomas Edison looms large in the history of motion pictures but in fact Louis Le Prince pipped him to the post, filming the first-ever moving picture sequence in 1888. Two years after finessing his invention, though, the Frenchman boarded a train in his homeland and disappeared. The events that followed read like a wild whodunnit, with his family pointing fingers at none other than... Thomas Edison.

## FICTION

**Privilege**

by Guinevere Glasfurd  
(Two Roads, 352 pages, £18.99)

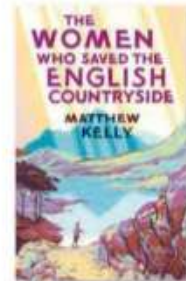
**Power of the pen**

Mid-18th-century France was a place of opulence and anger, where radical authors keen to circulate their incendiary views were forced to dodge royal censors and spies. Teenager Delphine Vimond is thrust into this shadowy world, meeting an apprentice printer named Chancery Smith who's been tasked with sniffing out the identity of an anonymous author who's penned dangerous papers.

## SOCIAL

**The Women Who Saved the English Countryside**

by Matthew Kelly  
(Yale, 400 pages, £20)

**Changing landscapes**

This joint biography profiles four women who reshaped access to, and attitudes towards, England's countryside. Octavia Hill co-founded the National Trust, of which Beatrix Potter was a key benefactor; Pauline Dower shaped England's system of national parks; and Sylvia Sayer used political pressure to save her beloved Dartmoor. This is an inspiring look at connections between people, place and period.

## SEXUALITY

**Bi: The Hidden Culture, History and Science of Bisexuality**

by Julia Shaw  
(Canongate Books, 272 pages, £16.99)

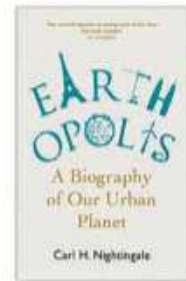
**A sexual revolution**

Bisexual erasure – the tendency for the identities and existence of bi people to be overlooked or misunderstood in popular culture and academic discourse – remains an issue, despite the strides made in the acceptance of LGBTQ people in recent decades. This lively book aims to put that right, exploring the changing ways in which bisexuality has been understood, and figures who deserve to be better known.

## SOCIAL

**Earthopolis: A Biography of Our Urban Planet**

by Carl H Nightingale  
(Cambridge University Press, 300 pages, £25)

**Inner-city pressure**

As well as changing individual lives, the rise of cities also created revolutionary new possibilities by bringing together a mass of people in a small space. That's one of the arguments made in this epic look at our "urban planet", from ancient settlements to today's metropolises. Along the way, it also charts the negative consequences of city life: social inequality, power imbalances and environmental damage.

## TECHNOLOGY

**The Internet Is Not What You Think It Is**

Justin EH Smith  
(Princeton University Press, 208 pages, £20)

**Internet history**

This heady, unusual book sets out to view the internet – idealistic experiment, revolutionary communication tool, repository of amusing cat memes – through a longer conceptual history. Instead of the expected trips to research laboratories and US university campuses, there are detours via Buddhist thought and a 19th-century hoax involving a "snail telegraph". Idiosyncratic, fascinating stuff. **H**

## VISIT

# Here be Vikings

This spring, the Jorvik Viking Festival returns to York after an extended pandemic-related hiatus, and it promises to be bigger than ever.

Traditional highlights – such as the Viking camp in Parliament Street and the march to Coppergate, during which a fearsome band of re-enactors storm to the Jorvik Viking Centre – are augmented with new events including the Jorvik Games. Held on the Saturday evening, the Games will see competitors face off in bouts designed to test their endurance, strength and cunning.

If you'd prefer to take part in the festival from the comfort of your own home, on 22 May you can head online to watch leading academics giving lectures on Viking hoards.

### Jorvik Viking Festival

York / 28 May–1 June / Booking essential for ticketed events / [jorvikvikingfestival.co.uk](https://jorvikvikingfestival.co.uk)



# ENCOUNTERS

**DIARY: VISIT / WATCH / LISTEN / TASTE**

By Jonathan Wright, Samantha Nott and Rhiannon Davies

**92 EXPLORE...** Hever Castle, Kent

**94 TRAVEL...** Trieste, Italy

## Facing the past

This year's Jorvik Viking Festival has a packed roster of events, from a lavish Viking banquet on 1 June to Best Beard and Strongest Viking competitions





Queen Elizabeth II in 2015. Her seven decades on the throne are the focus of Roger Michell's final film

## WATCH

## Crowning glory

When he was making his final film, a feature-length documentary about Queen Elizabeth II, Roger Michell explained why he was drawn to the monarch as a subject. "She has been our constant," he said. "I think she's drilled into our subconscious. She's like the world's biggest movie star, and you don't have to be a royalist to be amazed by her."

Sadly, the director died in September 2021, but he had completed work on *Elizabeth: A Portrait in Parts*, which is being released this month to tie in with celebrations for the Queen's platinum jubilee. Expect a film rich in archive material, offering a fresh and inventive take on Elizabeth's life and times.

## Elizabeth: A Portrait in Parts

In cinemas from Friday 27 May

## VISIT

## Sweet treatments

A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down. Now a new exhibition at the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh explores how food itself has been viewed as medicine over the past six centuries. Using manuscripts, illustrations and unusual artefacts (such as Dr Gregory's Stomachic Powder patented laxative, below) it traces the

complex relationship between diet and health. Through items such as 17th-century recipe books, we learn how food was thought to prevent and cure illness, and also discover the darker aspects of diet control.



## Food: Recipe or Remedy

Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh / Until 27 January 2023  
/ [rcpe.ac.uk](http://rcpe.ac.uk)

## WATCH

## Meet the family

When a show reaches its 19th series, it's clearly doing something right. That's certainly the case with *Who Do You Think You Are?*, a genealogy programme in which celebrities trace their lineage – and often react with shock to what they discover.

The series returns with five new episodes, kicking off with comedian Sue Perkins re-searching the poignant story of her orphaned grandfather. Novelist and gameshow whizz Richard Osman, *The Great British Bake Off* co-host Matt Lucas, actor Anna Maxwell Martin and Ralf Little, the latest lead in *Death in Paradise*, also feature.

## Who Do You Think You Are?

BBC One / From Thursday 26 May

Comedian Sue Perkins investigates her orphaned grandfather's moving story in the latest series of *Who Do You Think You Are?*



# HISTORY ON THE AIRWAVES

“We’ve been sending vinegar flies into orbit since 1947. I wish they went up in little space suits”



**DR ERICA MCALISTER** (left), fly expert and senior curator at the Natural History Museum, tells us about her returning series *Metamorphosis: How Insects Transformed Our World*

## What’s the premise of the series?

There’s looking at nature for its beauty or for its ecological value, but there’s also looking at nature for inspiration. Insects have been around for millions of years, and the idea behind the series is that successful insect species have evolved to be amazing in their environments.

The series also looks at pioneering entomologists – not necessarily people who are trained in entomology, but people who look at insects in a completely different way. They examine something obscure about a species’ biomechanics or physiology – illuminating some way in which the insect can help us.

## So how *can* insects help us?

There’s a beetle that stands on its head and is able to condense water on its bum, which is a brilliant skill if you ask me. Bioengineers have been looking at the nanostructure of this insect as a way to think in new ways about water-condensing qualities. This all links to our work at the Natural History Museum, because within our collections we hold the rich biological heritage of the planet. We want to encourage people to think more about these collections and how they can help us in the future.

## Has the idea that we might look to insects for ideas and in research been around for a long time?

Yes. Paper [an invention attributed to Han dynasty Chinese court official Cai Lun, c50–121 AD] was inspired by watching paper wasps. And we’ve been sending vinegar flies into space since 1947 to study the effects on them. I wish they had little suits, but I interviewed a woman from Nasa and she was like, “No...”

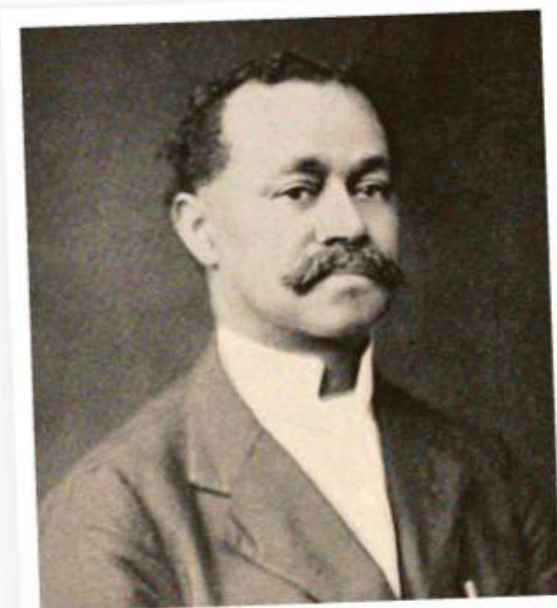
## Can you tell us about some of the historical characters you encounter?

There’s no doubt that I’ve learned from

a long line of eccentrics! One of the people we discussed in the first series was flea expert Miriam Rothschild [1908–2005]. She used to turn up at the museum with a brace of pheasants or partridges to give to members of staff. She’d always wear wellington boots, which is not technically allowed in the collections – but it’s Miriam Rothschild and you can’t really say no.

In the new series, we look at an African-American researcher called Charles Henry Turner [1867–1923]. Because of prejudice, he was never able to get any formal research work but he independently produced scores of papers based on brilliant experiments, trying to determine how insects think and learn. Three of his papers made it into [renowned journal] *Science*, which is extraordinary because he did this with so many obstacles in his way. His work on bees was amazing, and he’s only now truly getting the recognition he deserves. **H**

**Metamorphosis: How Insects Transformed Our World** returns to BBC Radio 4 on Monday 23 May. The first series is available to stream via BBC Sounds



The scientific achievements of Charles Henry Turner (above) are celebrated in *Metamorphosis*



GUSTAVUS VASSA.  
Published by Isaac Knapp, St. Andrews

An image of the influential abolitionist Olaudah Equiano from his autobiography

## LISTEN

## Abolitionist and adventurer

By any standards, the life of Olaudah Equiano was remarkable. Born in the kingdom of Benin (in what is now Nigeria) in c1745, Equiano was enslaved as a child. Transported to Barbados and then to the colony of Virginia, he was purchased by Michael Henry Pascal, a Royal Navy lieutenant. Renamed Gustavus Vassa, he became Pascal’s unpaid servant and later wrote first-hand accounts of battles fought during the Seven Years’ War.

Equiano was literate thanks in part to Robert King, an American Quaker and merchant who, having bought Equiano, encouraged him to master reading and writing (which he’d first learned on board naval ships). In 1766, Equiano bought his freedom from King.

A life of travel and adventure followed, but it was as a freedman living in London in the 1780s that he found fame when he became involved in the abolitionist movement. His autobiography *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, The African* (1789), a bestseller in his own lifetime, has subsequently become a key text in understanding the era. Now a new BBC radio docudrama charts his life and times.

## The Amazing Life of Olaudah Equiano

BBC Radio 4 / Tuesday 24 May

## WEEKLY TV & RADIO

Visit [historyextra.com](http://historyextra.com) for weekly updates on upcoming television and radio programmes

## TASTE

### Crème à la Carême

This French dessert is named after Marie-Antoine Carême, the famous early 19th-century chef who devised sumptuous banquets for the prince regent, later George IV. This recipe serves 10 to 12 people.

**Difficulty:** 5/10

**Time:** 5 hours 15 mins

## INGREDIENTS

18 sponge fingers  
100ml kirsch  
135g orange jelly, made up with 250ml hot water

### Filling

4 egg yolks  
100g golden caster sugar  
250ml milk  
1 vanilla pod, split  
4 leaves of gelatine, soaked in cold water

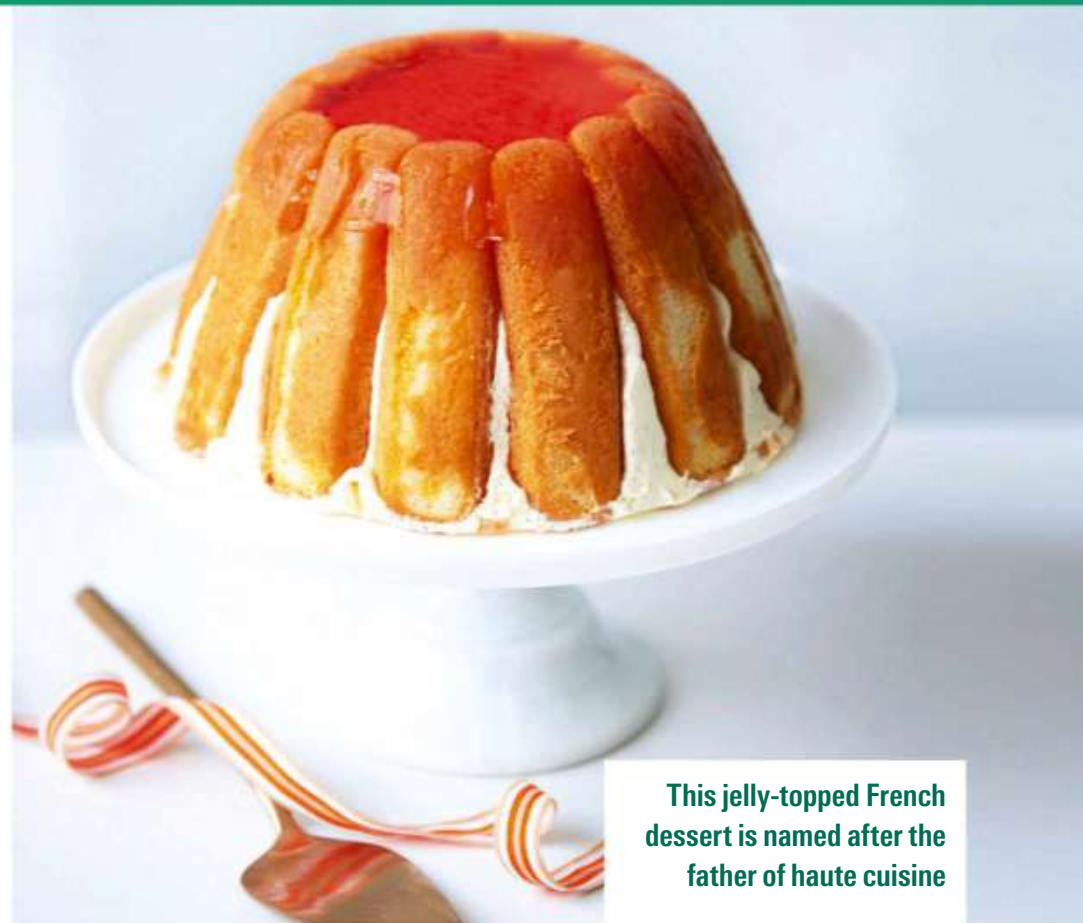
500ml double cream, whipped to soft peaks  
200g chopped candied orange or 200g chopped mixed peel

## METHOD

**1.** Lay the sponge fingers on a plate, drizzle with the kirsch and then brush with the jelly. Line a pudding basin with the biscuits, positioning them vertically. Then pour the jelly down the side of the mould, making sure the biscuits stay in place. Chill in the fridge for 1 hour.

**2.** To make the filling, whisk the egg yolks and sugar together in a bowl until pale. Combine the milk and vanilla in a saucepan, bring to the boil and then pour through a sieve onto the egg mixture. Whisk to combine, then return to the pan and heat gently, stirring until it thickens. Pour the mixture into a clean bowl, then squeeze the water from the gelatine and whisk the gelatine into the custard. Leave to cool completely.

**3.** Fold the cream into the

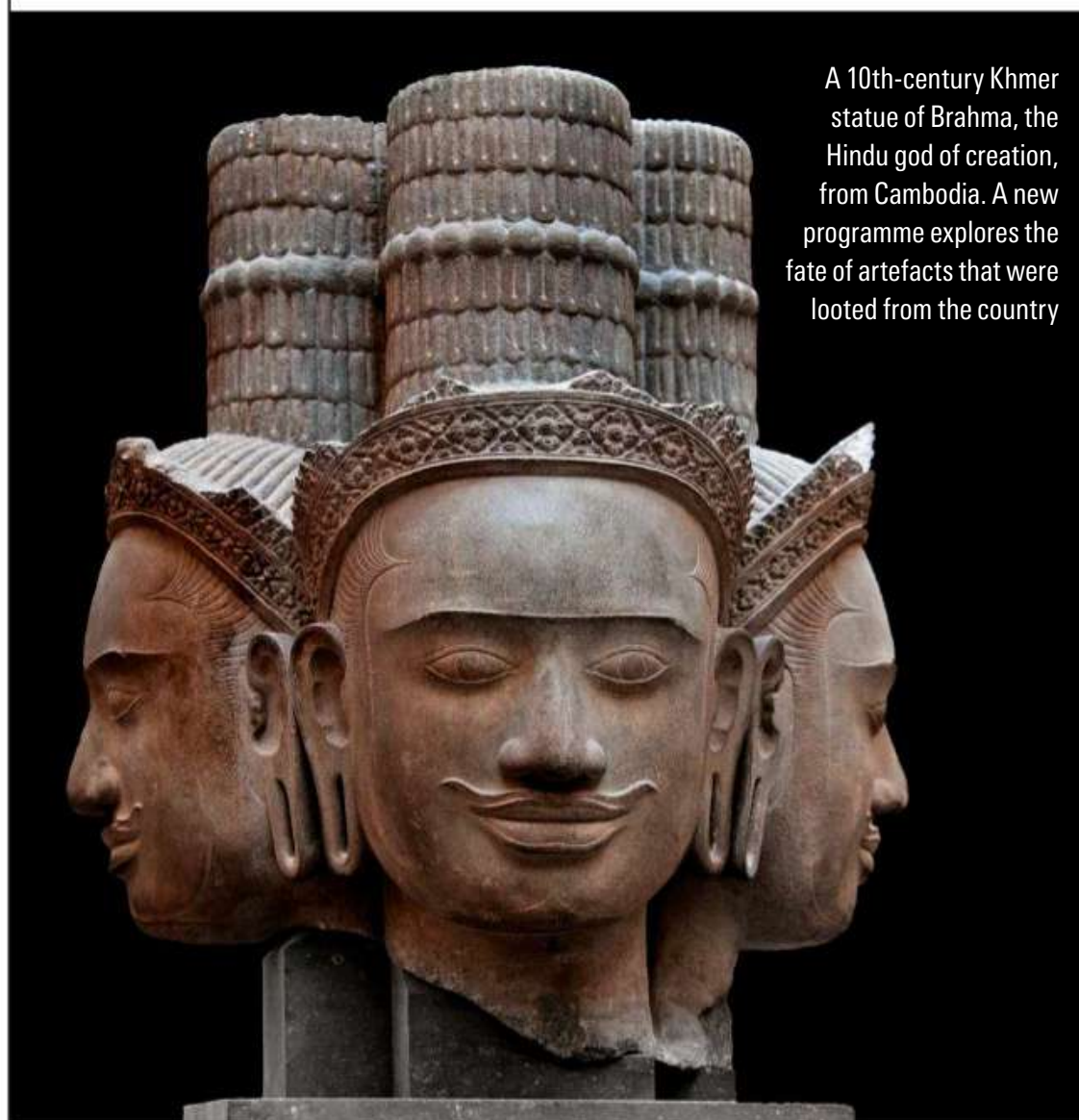


This jelly-topped French dessert is named after the father of haute cuisine

cooled custard one-third at a time, then fold in the candied orange. Spoon the mixture into the pudding basin up to the top of the sponge fingers, then refrigerate the dessert for 3 hours.

**4.** Invert the basin onto a plate and place a hot cloth on the outside to loosen it. Remove the basin and serve immediately.

*Recipe sourced from BBC Good Food magazine*



A 10th-century Khmer statue of Brahma, the Hindu god of creation, from Cambodia. A new programme explores the fate of artefacts that were looted from the country

## LISTEN

### Return of the living gods

The question of whether and when antiquities should be repatriated is an issue that is occupying ever more of the attention of those who run the world's most famous museums. Usually, the artefacts in question left their countries of origin long ago. But that's not true in the case of Cambodia, where an investigative team is dealing with the thefts of prized treasures that may have happened as recently as the 1980s, 1990s and even the early 2000s.

For a new BBC Radio 4 documentary, Celia Hatton reports on the Cambodian team now examining UK collections including those of the British Museum and the V&A. Over the course of its work, the team has built up a network of former looters, now government witnesses, with code names such as Red Horse and Iron Princess. At the centre of many of the sales was a rogue British art dealer, Douglas Latchford (1931–2020), who faced a US indictment on wide-ranging charges of trafficking and dealing in stolen goods but died before he could be tried.

Underpinning the investigators' efforts is the idea that ancient statues taken from temples are not just pieces of stone but represent living gods – and the Cambodians want their gods back.

**Crossing Continents – Cambodia: Returning the Gods**

BBC Radio 4 / Thursday 12 May

CLARE WINFIELD-BBC GOOD FOOD/ALAMY

## VISIT

## Priceless words

Whether it's the finely wrought jewellery piled high in the pharaohs' tombs of ancient Egypt, or the flakes that were brushed over medieval artworks to make them glimmer in the candlelight, gold has enthralled us for millennia.

The British Library is exploring how the precious metal has been used to elevate the written word throughout history. Bringing together stunning examples of gold-adorned manuscripts, scrolls and sacred texts gathered from more than 20 countries, the exhibition also reveals the fascinating stories of the owners of these magnificent documents.

### Gold

British Library, London / 20 May–2 October /  
Booking advised / [bl.uk](#)



A miniature Qur'an with gold cover and carved jade case. Fifty lavishly decorated manuscripts are displayed in the British Library's new exhibition

GETTY IMAGES

## WATCH

## Regret and defiance

On 25 May 1895, Oscar Wilde was sentenced to two years' hard labour for gross indecency. Such were attitudes towards homosexuality at the time that the trial judge, Sir Alfred Wills, thought Wilde's sentence to be "totally inadequate for a case such as this". A brilliant career was ending in disgrace.

But what did Wilde himself think about his situation? Exploring this question is a new one-man play directed by Trevor Nunn and written by Stuart Paterson, which is being filmed for BBC Four. Toby Stephens (*Lost in Space*) stars as Wilde, referred to throughout by his prisoner number in Reading Gaol: C33.

The play portrays Wilde at his lowest ebb – condemned to solitary confinement because of his sexuality, filthy because he is denied water to wash himself, and on the verge of madness. It's the cue for the imprisoned writer to begin a conversation with his former self – the elegantly attired wit who was the toast of London society. Among the subjects across which he ranges are his abandonment by his wife and sons, his feelings towards his former lover, Lord Alfred Douglas, and, inevitably, his own humiliation.

### Prisoner C33

BBC iPlayer / Streaming now



Oscar Wilde (left) with his lover, Lord Alfred Douglas, in 1893. Two years later, Wilde was imprisoned for gross indecency



John William Waterhouse's 1891 oil painting *Circe Offering the Cup to Ulysses*. She is one of many spiritual beings in the British Museum's new exhibition

## LISTEN

### Strength of purpose

Life dealt Joan Rhodes (1921–2010) some terrible cards. Deserted by both parents, she landed in the workhouse. But from an early age she was a street performer and blessed with remarkable strength – both attributes that help explain her decision to become a strongwoman who toured the country and appeared on TV shows and in movies.

Her fortitude is much admired by Anna Maxwell Martin, who approves of the fact that Rhodes never complained about her start in life. The *Motherland* and *Line of Duty* star selects Rhodes to be celebrated in Radio 4's ever-excellent historical biographical series *Great Lives*. In other forthcoming episodes, comedian Rob Newman speaks up for New Deal architect Franklin D Roosevelt. **H**

### Great Lives

BBC Radio 4 & BBC Sounds / Tuesday 17 May



Joan Rhodes tears a phone book in half to show off her strength in this 1953 photograph. The strongwoman features on the newest season of *Great Lives*

GALLERY OLDHAM/GETTY IMAGES

## VISIT

### Female mystique

Witches, goddesses, demons and saints have been woven into the fabric of our belief systems and myths since ancient times. Now the British Museum is making history with the first major exhibition dedicated to female spiritual beings. Among more than 70 sculptures, paintings and sacred artefacts from six continents, stand-out objects include an intriguing sculpture of Lilith, seen as Satan's consort in the Jewish tradition.

The display seeks to examine the various ways in which our forebears

grappled with femininity, spanning themes ranging from wisdom and passion to war and justice. To generate discussion about the themes, contributors such as classicist Mary Beard offer their thoughts throughout the exhibition through specially commissioned audio-visual think pieces.

### Feminine Power: The Divine to the Demonic

The British Museum, London / 19 May–25 September  
/ Booking advised / [britishmuseum.org](http://britishmuseum.org)

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## EXPLORE... HEVER CASTLE, KENT

# Romantic fantasy

Medieval stronghold, luxurious Tudor residence, American millionaire's bolthole: Hever Castle harmoniously recalls a variety of past identities.

**CHRISTOPHER HARDING** explores Anne Boleyn's childhood home

Approaching from a distance, down a pathway and across a wooden bridge, Hever Castle looks as though it has had an enormous can of green paint thrown at it. A joyous splash of ivy brings to life the light stone walls above and around the portcullis, setting the tone for a visitor attraction whose keynote is the sensuous, minimally self-conscious enjoyment of a rich history.

That history began in earnest in the early 1500s when the castle, near Edenbridge in Kent, became the childhood home of Anne Boleyn. Even under her ambitious, up-and-coming family, a building whose earliest structures date back to the 13th century was never allowed to sprawl. It remained the stuff of childish fancy: small and symmetrical, from its delicate crenellations to the drawbridge over a modest moat, all set in fine open grounds.

The greatest treasures inside the castle are two exquisitely illuminated prayer books, known as Books of Hours, which belonged to Anne Boleyn and bear her writing inside. These objects offer a precious moment of connection with Anne amid the relative anonymity of Tudor beams and artefacts – though the torture implements are undoubtedly arresting: rusty, pointy and ingeniously wicked. The myriad unknowns of Anne's early years inevitably create limitations for attempted historical reconstruction; the audio guide, though generally useful, frequently hedges its bets with “might” and “perhaps” when attempting to describe her life at Hever.

Hever Castle has been an object of fantasy not just for children but also for a wealthy American businessman and philanthropist. William Waldorf Astor, originally of New York City and latterly a British subject, bought

the castle in 1903 and set about breathing new life into it. He added accommodation for guests, styled as a “medieval village”. He engaged the architect Frank Pearson to design a 50-hectare garden, including an Italian Garden serving as the setting for a collection of classical antiquities acquired during Astor's time as American ambassador in Rome. And he had the inside of the castle extensively refurbished with intricate oak panelling and wood carving, bequeathing to visitors today a snapshot of the early 20th-century high life.

As if to balance out the castle's heavy debt to the Astors, Hever's extensive grounds are left very much in the hands of the Tudors. Women in period costume wander around arm in arm, introducing themselves and offering historical titbits in the first person – “I am Anne's mother,” begins one when we meet. The men, meanwhile, fight: on the day I visited with my family, there was hand-to-hand combat – involving a generous element of slapstick – and a jousting tournament over which Henry VIII himself presided. At this point we zoomed past the Astors and came crashing into the 21st century, courtesy of some kingly commentary on Brexit and traffic congestion around the M25; more authentically Tudor, perhaps, were the jokes at the expense of tricky continentals.

Strange as it may seem, all this holds together remarkably well at Hever Castle, with the proud embracing of a multi-faceted past married to the strong desire to create a fun day out – for children, especially. My daughter came away having learned just enough about Anne Boleyn to pique her interest, mixed with memories of serving as a pike-bearer in a parade, getting thoroughly soaked in a water maze and having Henry VIII try to steal her teddy during a photo op.

It's advisable to book ahead, and to check which activities – some of which are seasonal – are running on the day you plan to visit. **H**

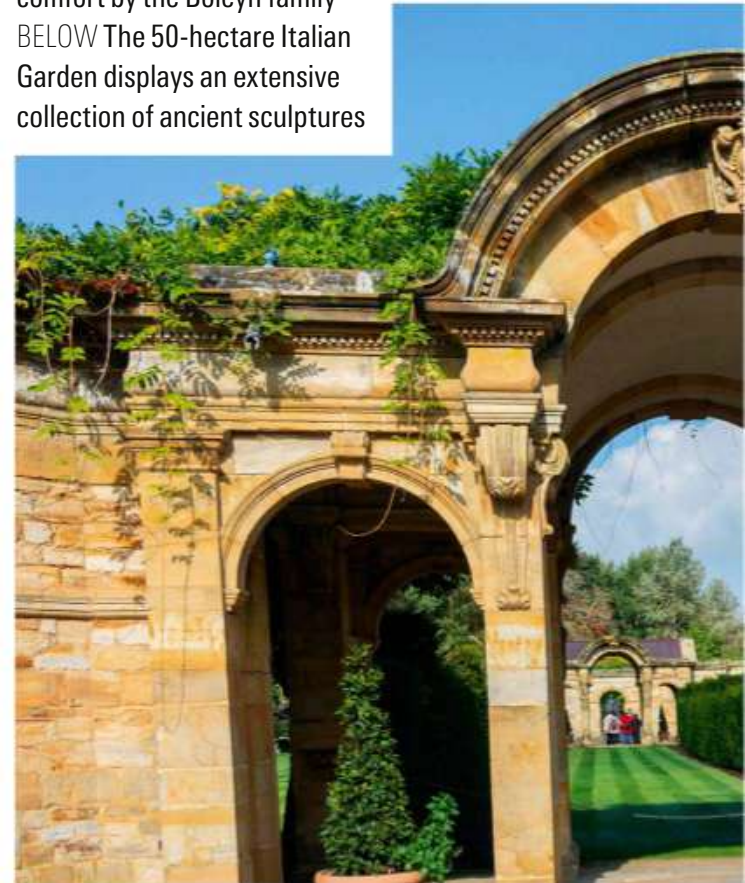
.....  
**Christopher Harding** is senior lecturer in Asian history at the University of Edinburgh

**VISIT** For more information on visiting Hever Castle, go to [hevercastle.co.uk](http://hevercastle.co.uk)



ABOVE The main entrance and drawbridge of Hever Castle, built for defence in the Middle Ages and redeveloped for comfort by the Boleyn family

BELOW The 50-hectare Italian Garden displays an extensive collection of ancient sculptures



The expansive grounds of Hever Castle encompass a moat, formal gardens, grottoes, fountains and mazes

**// Even under the ambitious Boleyns, Hever remained the stuff of childish fancy, from delicate crenellations to the moat drawbridge //**



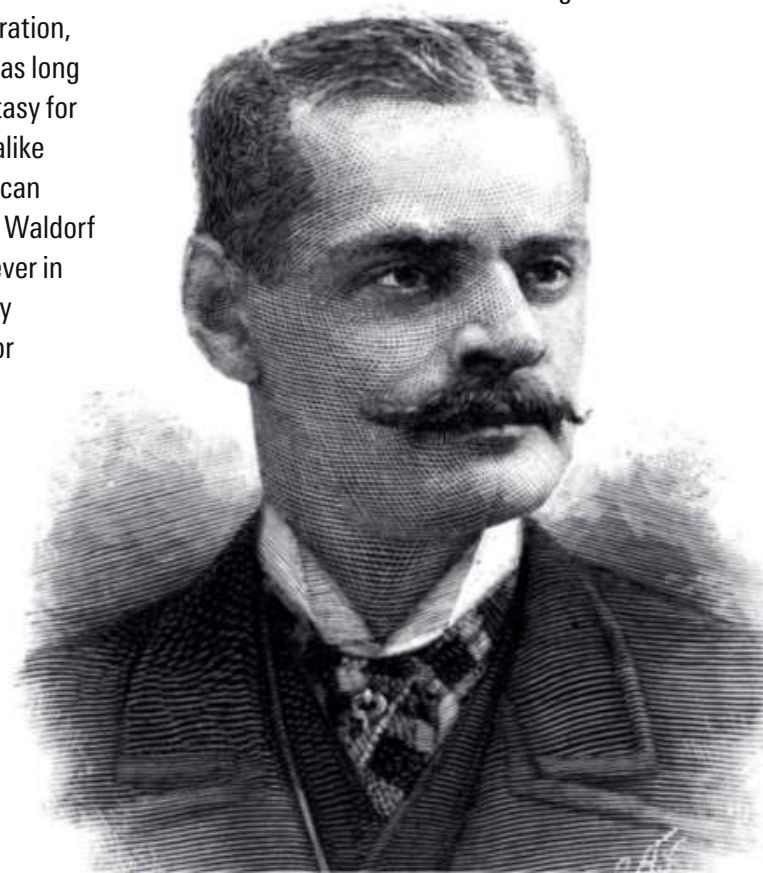
A Book of Hours owned by Anne Boleyn, containing her writing – one of the few truly personal connections with the ill-fated queen



Costumed actors perform Tudor dances in the gardens at Hever



LEFT A romantic illustration, c1850. Hever Castle has long been an object of fantasy for children and owners alike  
RIGHT Wealthy American businessman William Waldorf Astor, who bought Hever in 1903 and substantially remodelled the interior





## Adriatic outpost of empires

There's a distinctive "otherness" to this coastal city. Trieste sits on a thin finger of Italian soil curled around the head of the Adriatic Sea, close to the border with Slovenia and about 25 miles from Croatia. It has a very singular history – albeit one touched by many European powers, having been under the influence of the Roman, Byzantine and Venetian empires.

Long a Habsburg possession, Trieste was an important outpost of this central European powerhouse. With its deep-water port and rail links to destinations across Europe, it was a key transport hub and a fashionable resort in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Annexed by Italy in the aftermath of the First World War, Trieste emerged from the Second World War as an independent territory under the protection of the UN, becoming part of Italy once more in 1954.

This complex legacy has endowed Trieste with an unusual patchwork of sites to explore. The city centre and waterfront have an unmistakably central-European air, with the vast, sea-facing Piazza dell'Unità d'Italia bearing the hallmarks of Austro-Hungarian urban design. The Borgo Teresiano area around the Canal Grande is studded with elegant 18th and 19th-century mansions, cafes and shops. Here also is the atmospheric Chiesa di Santo Spiridione, a vast Byzantine-style Orthodox church frequented by Trieste's large Serbian population.

There are several excellent museums to discover. The Risiera di San Sabba, a former rice plant used as a Nazi concentration camp during the Second World War, is now a moving memorial. Museo Revoltella, an unusual collection of modern art and sculpture founded by a 19th-century businessman, is housed in his former residence. And James Joyce, who lived in Trieste from 1904–20, is commemorated with a statue and a museum shared with his friend, local-born writer Italo Svevo. Alternatively, simply stroll the boulevards, piazzas and waterfront, pondering the city's place in European history, ancient and modern. **H**

### IF YOU LIKE THIS...

- **Ljubljana, Slovenia's** compact, bustling capital, is a short journey from Trieste.
- A port city with thousands of years of history? You could also be in **Marseille, France**.

By **Tom Hall**, travel writer and co-author of *Lonely Planet's Guide to Train Travel in Europe*

**Reflecting on the past**  
Trieste's Canal Grande is overlooked by grand mansions and the domes of the Chiesa di Santo Spiridione

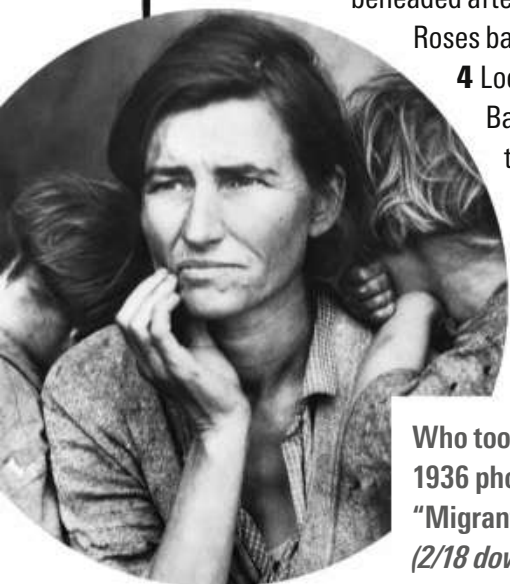
# PRIZE CROSSWORD

## Across

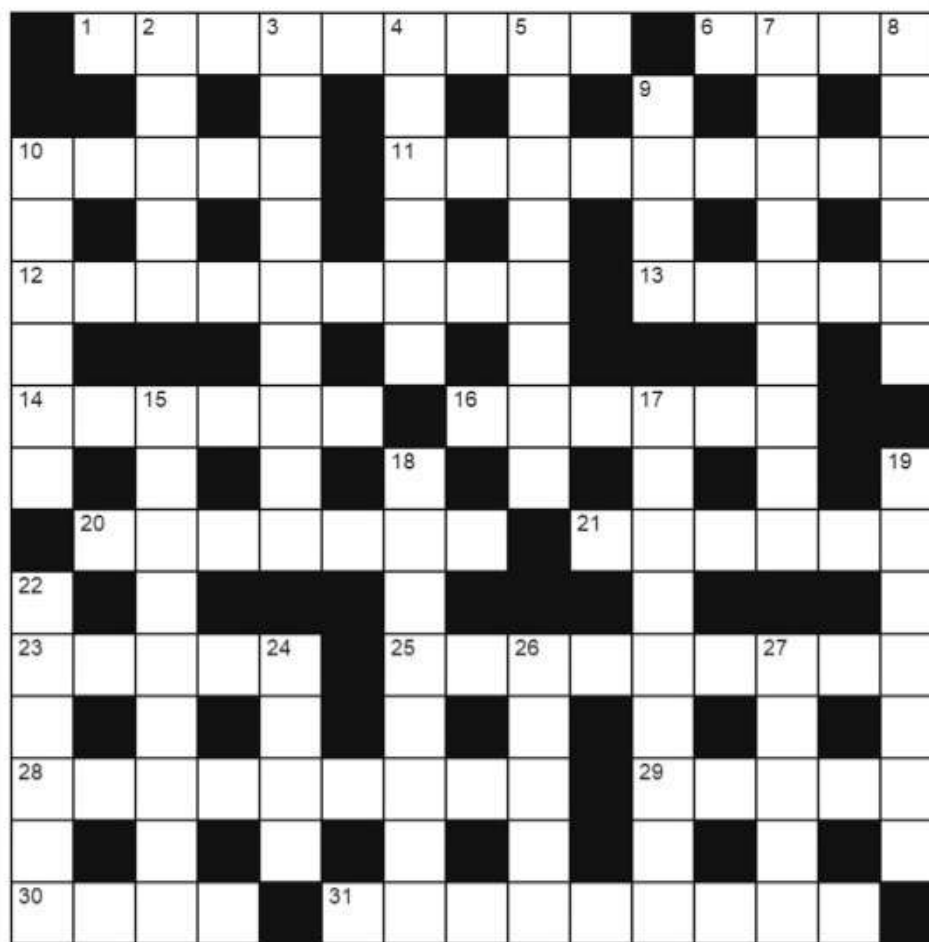
- 1** Native American people who first settled the Ottawa Valley of present-day Quebec (9)  
**6** Its nuclear nature was demonstrated by the early 20th-century "gold foil experiment" of Ernest Rutherford and colleagues (4)  
**10** Leopold von \_\_\_\_, 19th-century German historian noted for his scholarly method (5)  
**11** A traditionally controversial system of basing people's entitlement to state-funded services on their personal resources (5,4)  
**12** Policy of easing import and export restrictions, as favoured by economists Adam Smith and David Ricardo (4,5)  
**13** The Romans called this country Arabia Felix, owing to its fertility and dominant commercial location (5)  
**14** London coffee house patronised by ship-owners and financiers, giving its name to the insurance enterprise which started there (6)  
**16** A king of Wessex, celebrated for saving his kingdom from Viking conquest and for his enlightened rule (6)  
**20** Aviation pioneer, the first to fly an aircraft across the English Channel (7)  
**21** The battle of the \_\_\_\_, fought 26–30 August 1918, was a victory for Canadian forces in the First World War (6)  
**23** "Johnny \_\_\_\_" (often shortened) personifies a common soldier of the Confederacy in the American Civil War (5)  
**25** Eighth-century defensive earthwork, roughly following the border between England and Wales (5,4)  
**28** The democratising Soviet president who survived a coup attempt in 1991 but resigned a few months later (9)  
**29** Synthetic material developed in the USA in the 1930s, used eg in parachutes (5)  
**30** Charles Edward Stuart took refuge on this island after defeat at Culloden in 1746 (4)  
**31** This town's 900-year-old street market is the oldest in Kent (9)

## Down

- 2** See 18 down  
**3** Welsh noble, founder of a royal dynasty, beheaded after a Wars of the Roses battle (4,5)  
**4** Location of West Bank caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found (6)

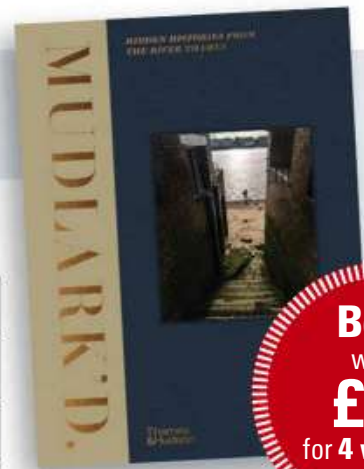


Who took this famous 1936 photograph, "Migrant Mother"? (2/18 down)



- 5** A patron of Columbus, who ruled Castile jointly with her husband Ferdinand of Aragon (8)  
**7** The name given to the 11th month of the French Revolutionary calendar (9)  
**8** Eg that on board the slave ship *Amistad* in July 1839 (6)  
**9** King of Northumbria (one spelling), noted for his role in the Synod of Whitby (664) (4)  
**10** Frill on a garment; in Elizabethan times it developed (with a slightly different name) into a highly elaborate neckband (6)  
**15** Perhaps the best known work of John Stuart Mill, the 19th-century utilitarian philosopher-economist (2,7)  
**17** Roman Catholics who, in the 16th century, refused to attend Church of England services (9)  
**18/2** Influential US photographer whose famous picture "Migrant Mother" (1936) became an icon of the Great Depression (8,5)  
**19** In English feudal law, the part of a manor occupied by the lord's villeins or leasehold tenants (7)  
**22** A Belgian Hanseatic League town that declined as a centre of trade when its river silted up in the 15th century (6)  
**24** Edward \_\_\_\_, the British humourist and artist, who was briefly a drawing master to Queen Victoria (4)  
**26** \_\_\_\_ Castle in Aberdeenshire has been host to William the Lion, Robert the Bruce, Charles I and Anne Halkett (5)  
**27** Venue of a conference in February 1945 at which the postwar reorganisation of Germany was discussed (5)

Compiled by **Eddie James**



Book worth **£25** for 4 winners

## Mudlark'd

By **Malcolm Russell**

Bringing together the stories of artefacts unearthed on the shores of the river Thames, this is an unconventional and fascinating look at London's history. Malcolm Russell reveals little-known stories from the past, such as the woman who set up Britain's first fascist organisation.

The book is filled with arresting photographs, as well as a guide for those who want to start mudlarking.

## HOW TO ENTER

● Open to residents of the UK (& Channel Islands). Post entries to **BBC History Magazine, June 2022 Crossword, PO Box 501, Leicester LE94 0AA** or email them to **june2022@historycomps.co.uk** by 5pm on **8 June 2022**. ● Entrants must supply full name, address and phone number. The winners will be the first correct entries drawn at random after the closing time. Winners' names will appear in the August 2022 issue. By entering, participants agree to be bound by the terms and conditions shown in full in the box below. Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) will use personal details in accordance with the Immediate Privacy Policy at <https://policies.immediate.co.uk/privacy>. ● Immediate Media Company Ltd (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) would love to send you newsletters, together with special offers and other promotions. If you would not like to receive these, please write 'NO INFO' on your entry. ● Branded BBC titles are licensed from or published jointly with BBC Studios (the commercial arm of the BBC). Please tick here ☐ if you'd like to receive regular newsletters, special offers and promotions from BBC Studios by email. Your information will be handled in accordance with the BBC Studios privacy policy: [bbcstudios.com/privacy](https://bbcstudios.com/privacy). – [bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidance/code-of-conduct](https://bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidance/code-of-conduct)

## Solution to our April 2022 crossword

**Across** 1 Tombs 4 Blockade 10 Iron Guard 11 SEATO 12 Iliad  
 13 Elizabeth 14 Grapnel 16 Erwin 19 The Mob 21 Brownie  
 22 Politburo 24 Hoess 26 Peter 27 Byzantium 28 Sing Sing 29 Menhir  
**Down** 1 Taiping 2 Maori 3 Segedunum 5 Luddite 6 Casca  
 7 Agamemnon 8 Enoch 15 Athelstan 17 Woodhenge 18 Bessemer  
 20 Bourbon 21 Bronze 22 Pepys 23 Turks 25/9 Edith Cavell

## Four winners of The Great British Dig

J Leighfield, Dorset; G Mattock, Hampshire; G Roberts, Essex;  
 M Berry, North Yorkshire

## CROSSWORD COMPETITION TERMS & CONDITIONS

● The crossword competition is open to all residents of the UK (& Channel Islands), aged 18 or over, except Immediate Media Company London Limited employees or contractors, and anyone connected with the competition or their direct family members. By entering, participants agree to be bound by these terms and conditions and that their name and county may be released if they win. Only one entry permitted per person. ● The closing date and time is as shown under How to Enter, above. Entries received after that will not be considered. Entries cannot be returned. Entrants must supply full name, address and daytime phone number. Immediate Media Company (publishers of *BBC History Magazine*) will not publish your personal details or provide them to anyone without permission. Read more about the Immediate Privacy Policy at [immediatemediacompany.co.uk/privacy-policy/](https://policies.immediate.co.uk/privacy-policy/). ● The winning entrants will be the first correct entries drawn at random after the closing time. The prize and number of winners will be as shown on the Crossword page. There is no cash alternative and the prize will not be transferable. Immediate Media Company London Limited's decision is final and no correspondence relating to the competition will be entered into. The winners will be notified by post within 20 days of the close of the competition. The name and county of residence of the winners will be published in the magazine within two months of the closing date. If the winner is unable to be contacted within one month of the closing date, Immediate Media Company London Limited reserves the right to offer the prize to a runner-up. ● Immediate Media Company London Limited reserves the right to amend these terms and conditions, or to cancel, alter or amend the promotion at any stage, if deemed necessary in its opinion, or if circumstances arise outside of its control. The promotion is subject to the laws of England.



Here's a selection of the exciting content that's coming up on our website [historyextra.com](https://www.historyextra.com)



### The real musketeers

The three musketeers, made famous by Alexandre Dumas and the many films his stories inspired, are among the best-known figures from ancien regime France. Moreover, the heroes of Dumas' stories – d'Artagnan, Athos, Porthos and Aramis – have real historical counterparts. Historian Dr Josephine Wilkinson separates their lives from legend.

[historyextra.com/three-musketeers](https://www.historyextra.com/three-musketeers)



### Clara Barton: the "angel of the battlefield"

A self-taught nurse who travelled to the frontlines of the American Civil War and established the American Red Cross, Barton was a visionary in the world of medical care. Jonny Wilkes traces her remarkable career.

[historyextra.com/clara-barton](https://www.historyextra.com/clara-barton)



### How WWI soldiers found hope in nature

Many troops used nature as a form of solace during the 1914–18 conflict. Cultural historian Bethany Wyatt considers the emotional connections of servicemen to the flora and fauna they encountered while at war.

[historyextra.com/ww1-soldiers-nature](https://www.historyextra.com/ww1-soldiers-nature)



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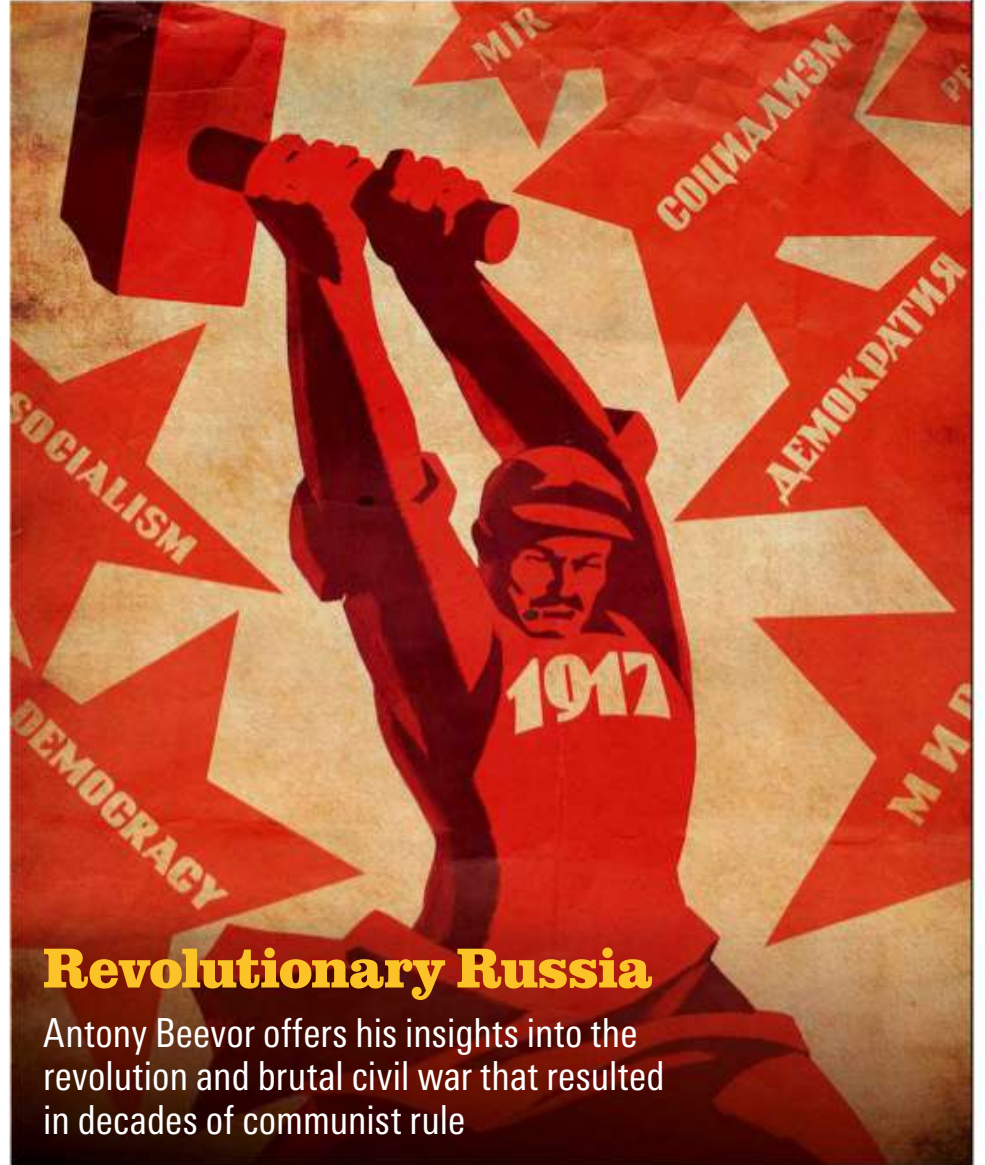
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# NEXT MONTH

July issue on sale 9 June 2022



## Revolutionary Russia

Antony Beevor offers his insights into the revolution and brutal civil war that resulted in decades of communist rule



## Watergate

Clifford Williamson explores the events of the great American political scandal

## Opening up the past

Rachel Hurdley reveals what front doors can tell us about British social history

## Normans in Africa

Levi Roach tells the story of a little-known medieval kingdom on the coast of north Africa

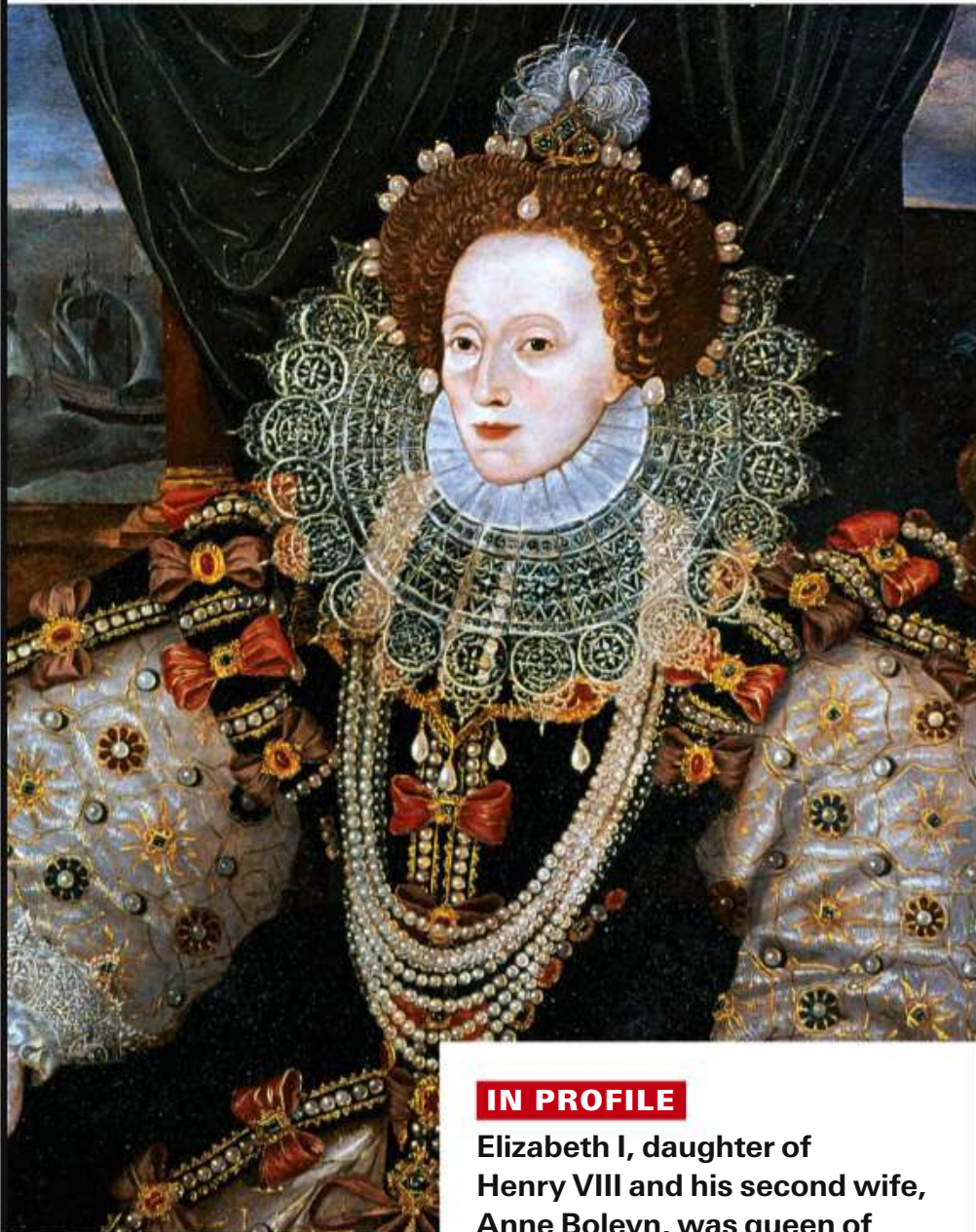


# MY HISTORY HERO

Local council support officer and podcaster **Jackie Weaver** chooses

## Elizabeth I

1533–1603



Elizabeth I, opulently attired in one of the three c1588 Armada portraits. "She drew strength from and took pride in her femininity," says Jackie Weaver. "Let's remember that she had to do everything while dressed up to the nines!"

### IN PROFILE

Elizabeth I, daughter of Henry VIII and his second wife, Anne Boleyn, was queen of England from 1558 until her death, which marked the end of the Tudor dynasty. One of her first acts as monarch was to restore England to Protestantism; she also had Mary, Queen of Scots imprisoned and executed, and the Spanish Armada was defeated during her reign.

// Elizabeth wouldn't let herself be pushed around by her male advisors – I get the sense of her as a sort of chair of the board //



**Jackie Weaver** is chief officer of the Cheshire Association of Local Councils; her taming of parish councillors online went viral last year. Her podcast is *Jackie Weaver Has the Authority*

**When did you first hear about Elizabeth I?** Probably at school, learning about the kings and queens of England in history lessons. But I suppose my interest was rekindled by watching big-screen dramatisations such as *Elizabeth* (1998), in which Cate Blanchett portrayed her so vividly. I realise that such biopics aren't always entirely accurate, but I think [Blanchett] provided real insights into the character of this extraordinary woman.

**What kind of woman was Elizabeth?** She lived in an age when the powers that be would cut off a woman's head simply because she couldn't bear a son. So it obviously wasn't a safe time or place to be a woman, and she was very much aware of this – that's key to understanding the longevity of her reign. She also had a real sense of style, spoke several languages and was an accomplished horsewoman. As a woman without a partner, she must have been extremely lonely at times but there is a strong sense that she put duty first. If she had married, even as queen she would have had to give up much of her power.

**What made Elizabeth a hero?** First and foremost, the way she shaped the country that England became. I also admire Elizabeth for being a poster child for women who are independent: she was a strong woman who held her own at a time when it was very much a man's world. She wouldn't let herself be pushed around by her male advisors; I get the sense of her as a sort of chair of the board.

Women who are powerful are often portrayed as man-like – it's as if they have to give up some of their femininity in order to be powerful. But I think Elizabeth drew strength from and took pride in her femininity. Let's remember that she had to do everything she did while dressed up to the nines!

**What was her finest hour?** I think you have to look at her reign in its entirety – all the things she achieved as queen – though her skill at playing off the Spanish against the French, as well as the defeat of the Spanish Armada, are worth noting. As is the strength and stability her long reign helped bring the country.

**Is there anything that you don't particularly admire about her?** I think she was unnecessarily cruel – she seems to have had no qualms about removing heads from bodies.

**How would she have handled a rowdy council meeting?** Heads would almost certainly have rolled!

**What would you ask Elizabeth if you could meet her?** I'd like to know her biggest regret. I suspect it might have been having Mary, Queen of Scots beheaded. **H**

*Jackie Weaver was talking to York Membership*

# This was Sylvia's promise to you...



A generation ago, a woman named Sylvia made a promise. As a doctor's secretary, she'd watched stroke destroy the lives of so many people. She was determined to make sure we could all live in a world where we're far less likely to lose our lives to stroke.

She kept her promise, and a gift to the Stroke Association was included in her Will. Sylvia's gift helped fund the work that made sure many more of us survive stroke now than did in her lifetime.

**Sylvia changed the story for us all. Now it's our turn to change the story for those who'll come after us.**

Stroke still shatters lives and tears families apart. And for so many survivors the road to recovery is still long and desperately lonely. If you or someone you love has been affected by stroke – you'll know just what that means.

But it doesn't have to be like this. You can change the story, just like Sylvia did, with a gift in your Will. All it takes is a promise.

You can promise future generations a world where researchers discover new treatments and surgeries and every single stroke survivor has the best care, rehabilitation and support network possible, to help them rebuild their lives.

Big or small, every legacy gift left to the Stroke Association will make a difference to stroke survivors and their families.

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Find out how by calling **020 7566 1505**  
or email [legacy@stroke.org.uk](mailto:legacy@stroke.org.uk)  
or visit [stroke.org.uk/legacy](https://stroke.org.uk/legacy)

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## Rebuilding lives after stroke

The Stroke Association is registered as a charity in England and Wales (No 211015) and in Scotland (SC037789). Also registered in the Isle of Man (No. 945) and Jersey (NPO 369), and operating as a charity in Northern Ireland.

**Stroke**  
Association



Relax  
with an



Brewed longer for a taste you'll want to savour